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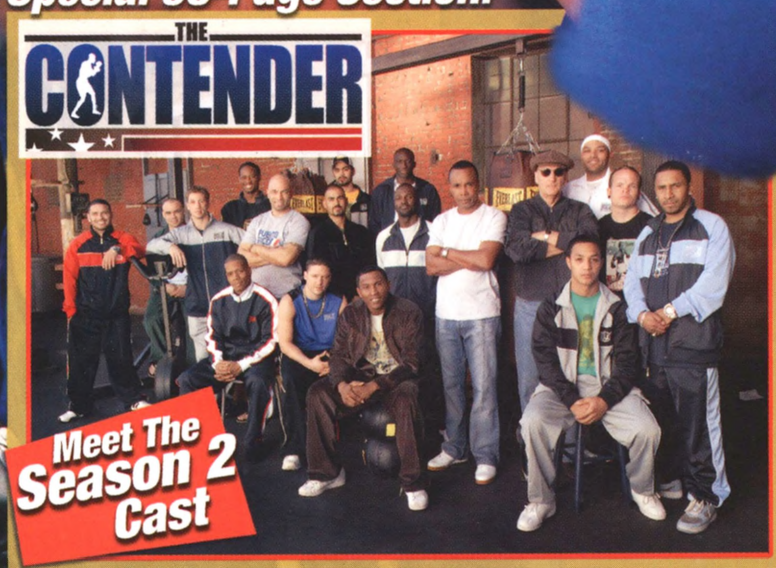

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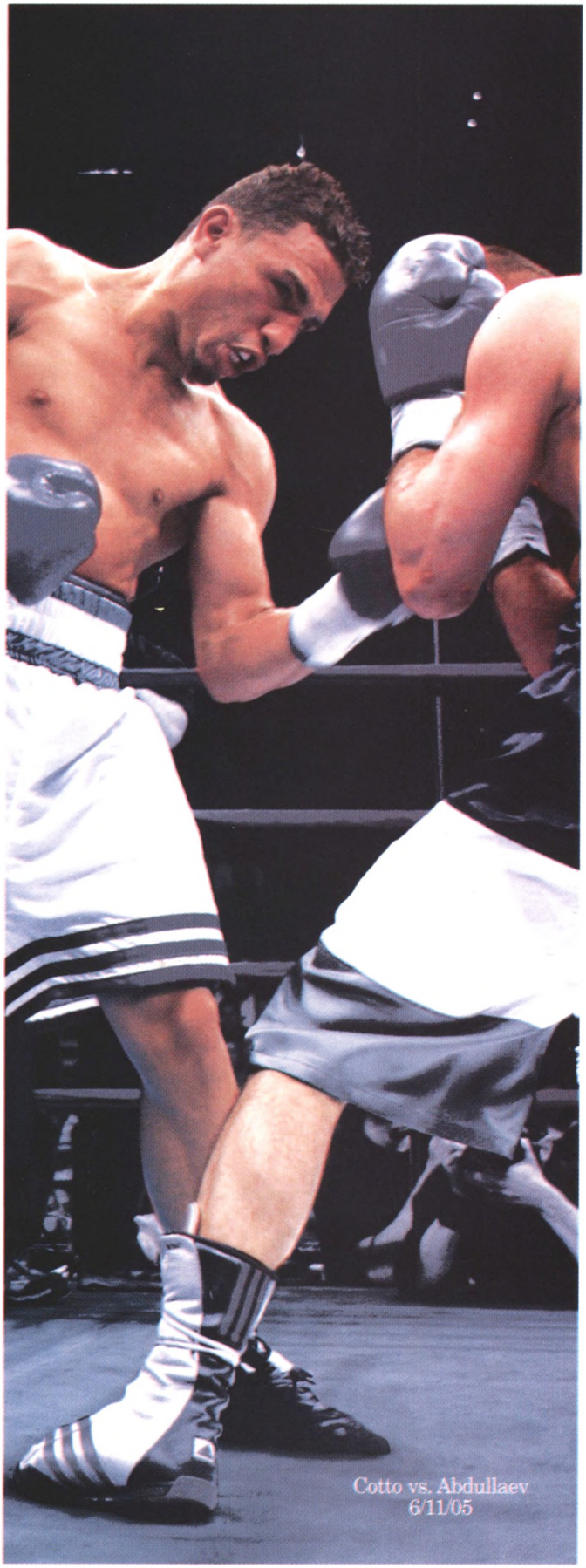

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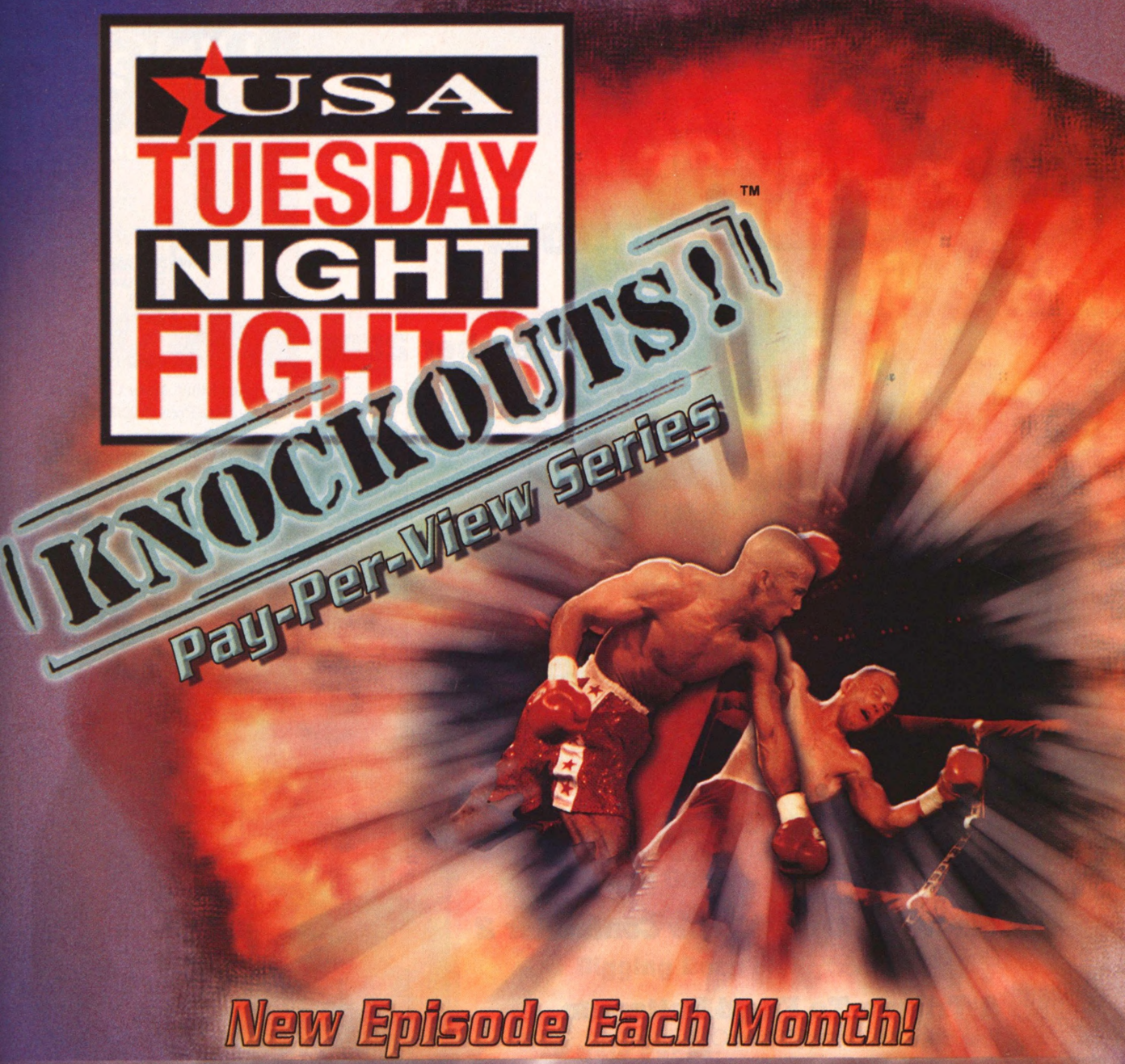

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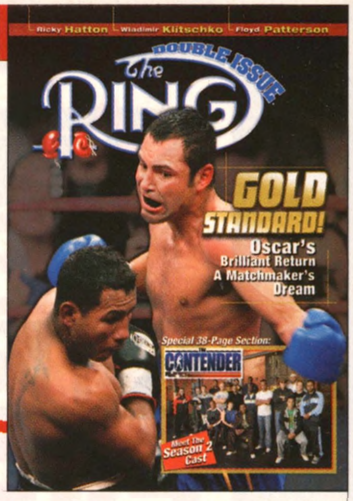

September 2006

De La Hoya- Mayorga by **Ethan Miller/Getty Images**
The Contender by **Blue Pixel © 2006 JMBP Inc.**

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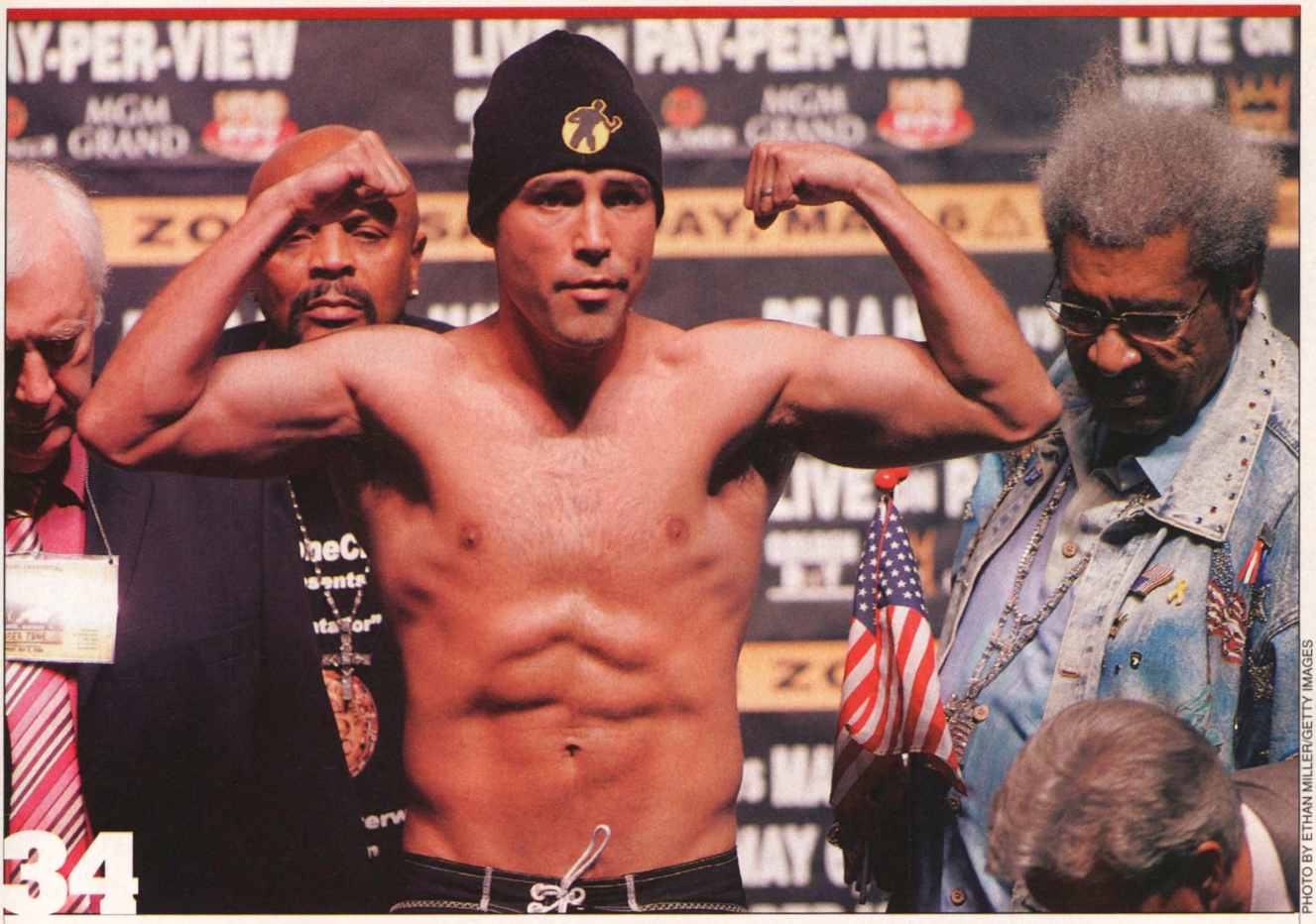

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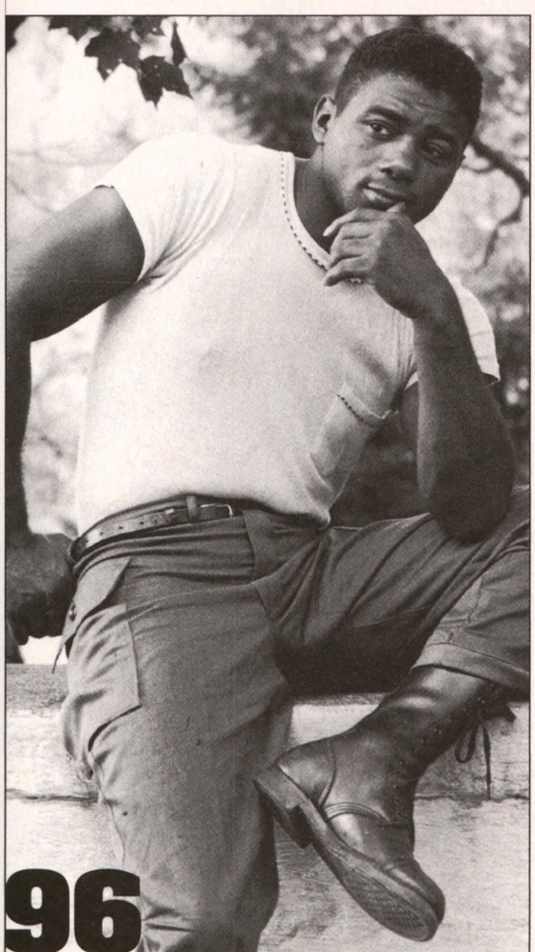

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PHOTO BY THOMAS LOHNES/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Opening Shot

A Byrd's eye view ...

... Or maybe not. Chris Byrd's right eye is closed and his left is covered in leather as Wladimir Klitschko fires away en route to a relatively easy seventh-round knockout of the IBF titlist in Mannheim, Germany. "Wladimir won this fight because he was better," said Byrd. "I couldn't overcome Wladimir's style. I tried to be more active in the second round and counterattack more .., but it was impossible."

[Ringside]

As is his wont, Oscar De La Hoya was noncommittal regarding his future following his spectacular knockout of Ricardo Mayorga. But I would be astounded if he never fights again. True, it would be a near-perfect note on which to end his Hall of Fame career, but unless Oscar's arm and shoulder injuries are worse than anticipated, he'll be back. You can count on it.

If you don't believe me, take a look at the photograph on the cover of this issue and tell me what you see on Oscar's face. Pretty scary, right? This is not the Hollywood-handsome Golden Boy who makes the girls squeal with delight and Madison Avenue throw open its checkbook. This is a ruthless predator whose entire being is focused on destroying the target in front of him. It is a photo of the beast that lurks beneath the beautiful veneer, and it's what makes De La Hoya a great fighter.

And don't think for one moment that Oscar didn't enjoy beating the crap out of Mayorga. You have to go all the way back to Yory Boy Campas in May 2003 for anything remotely similar, and dominating a dangerous man in the ring is a rush like no other. The Mayorga mauling has reminded De La Hoya just how potent of an elixir such an emphatic victory can be, and he won't want to let it go before at least one final fix.

If there is a problem, it is finding the right opponent. Though the pay-per-view public would probably buy it, Oscar's ego will not permit another fight against a Mayorga-type. The next fight must be a bigger challenge against somebody who will push De La Hoya to be the best that he can be, perhaps for the last time. In other words, somebody like Floyd Mayweather.

But even if that match proves impossible to make, De La Hoya will still fight on. He'll want to be paid what he's worth, of course, but it's not about the money anymore. Oscar is having fun again, the sort of fun you can only have inside of a boxing ring—the sort of fun that's so intoxicating you simply can't walk away.

◆◆◆

Ricky Hatton has a long way to go before equaling Henry Armstrong's unique feat of holding three genuine world titles simultaneously, but THE RING is certainly not going to stop him (or any other fighter for that matter) from trying. That's why readers will find Hatton's name listed twice in "THE RING Ratings" *(page 18)*—once as junior welterweight champion and again as the number-four welterweight contender.

We took similar action in 2003, when reigning light heavyweight champion Roy Jones moved up to heavyweight and beat John Ruiz for the WBA strap, allowing Jones to retain his 175-pound title, while giving him the number-four contender's spot among the big boys. Jones lost the light heavyweight championship two fights after defeating Ruiz and has not fought at heavyweight since, so there never came a time when he held two legitimate world titles.

As we went to press, Hatton still hadn't decided which weight class he is going to compete in, but if he wants to fight in both the 140- and 147-pound divisions, that's fine with THE RING.

The alphabet organizations won't allow a fighter to hold titles in two divisions at the same time, but THE RING does not believe in limiting what a boxer can achieve. That, like virtually all aspects of this sport, should be settled in the ring.

Nigel Collins
Editor-in-Chief

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Robert Nucci
Dave Hagman

ADVERTISING DIRECTOR
Vincent Bellissima
(215) 643-6385
vbellissima@kappapublishing.com

ADVERTISING ASSISTANT
Dianne Weber

SUBSCRIPTION INQUIRIES
London Publishing Co.
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★ Buddy McGirt
★ Michael Carbajal
★ Barry McGuigan
★ "Irish" Micky Ward
★ Carlos Palomino
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Judge Gives Naz Max

Naseem Hamed was a precociously gifted teenager when he first encountered Anthony Burgin. For three years, Burgin, a painter and decorator from Sheffield, trained at the same St. Thomas' Boys Club where Brendan Ingle was molding Hamed into a future featherweight champion. But when their paths collided again on the afternoon of May 2, 2005, Burgin was left near death and Hamed, who has not boxed for four years, faced a jail sentence, their mangled cars providing a frighteningly graphic image of how two lives had so horrifically intervened.

"You could easily have killed Mr. Burgin," Judge Alan Goldsack said when handing Hamed a 15-month custodial sentence in May at Sheffield Crown Court, as relatives of Hamed, including his pregnant wife, Eleasha, broke down in tears. "The available maximum, where death does not result, is insufficient to do justice in many cases. Yours, in my judgment, is such a case."

One motorist whom Hamed had passed on a road near his Sheffield home on the fateful day—in his $530,000 Mercedes SLR McLaren, registration number "NAS 1"—decried his driving as "dangerous, like a maniac." Another described the overtaking maneuver that almost claimed his former gym mate's life as "stupid, suicidal, and ridiculous." His speed had reached at least 90 mph when, on the brow of a hill and the wrong side of a single white line on the road, Hamed drove head-on into Burgin's VW Golf. Burgin's wife, Claire, who was sitting in the front passenger seat, broke a finger and a toe and sustained bruising to her face and body. Burgin suffered bruising to his brain and every major bone in his body was broken.

PHOTOS BY PAUL ELLIS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

A pensive-looking Hamed arrives at Sheffield Crown Court where he was sentenced to 15 months in prison for causing a car wreck that badly injured Anthony Burgin (inset)

"Without even checking if I was alive, without phoning for help, [Hamed] just walked away from the wreckage," Burgin revealed. "He abandoned us and left me to die because his first and only instinct was to save himself and walk away. That man left me for dead. I want to know how he could leave me there and go home to change his shirt. Why didn't he go to the fire station two doors from his home? If I'd been responsible for doing that to someone, I'd have to know how the other person was. But he didn't care. He took the easy way out and ran away."

Hamed suffered his only defeat as a professional fighter against Marco Antonio Barrera in April 2001. He had declined steadily from the moment in September 1995 when he stopped Steve Rob-

inson of Wales in eight rounds, but, blinded by hubris, he did not see it.

"I will get back to Las Vegas and box Barrera—and give him a severe beating," he announced in May 2002 after a pathetic points win in London over the limited Spaniard, Manuel Calvo.

Despite persistent rumors of a return, fueled by Hamed himself, he had boxed his last. The seeds of his destruction had long been sown.

"It all came out the minute he became European champion, then took the (WBO featherweight) title off Robinson," reflected Ingle. "Naz is a horrible person. I had him here 18 years and saw it all, from a kid who had nothing, living with his father and mother and eight brothers and sisters over a corner shop, to a fella who got delusions of grandeur and talked down to people who met him. 'Do you know who I am?' This was his attitude.

"I'd be here in the gym at seven in the morning, waiting for him, and he wouldn't show up till 11 o'clock at night. He became a law unto himself. I've sat in the car with him, terrified. 'Pull over, let me out,' I'd say. He was speeding all the time, and now he's wrecked a young man's life. Sadly, it was an accident waiting to happen."

—Brian Doogan

Full-Contact Chess

PHOTO BY PATRIK STOLLARZA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Jan Mielke (left) plays Stefan Dittrich during the first City Championships of Cologne in chess boxing

"Be3+, Qe2+, Nb3+ ... White has Black on the run, but there's the bell ending the round. White has the game in hand if only he can keep moving around the ring and avoid another one of Black's devastating right hooks."

No, your cable system hasn't crossed coverage of a heavyweight fight with a chess match. You're just getting a taste of chess boxing, a blend of mental and physical sport that debuted in 2003. The mastermind behind chess boxing is Dutch artist Iepe Rubingh, who fights/checks under the sobriquet "Iepe The Joker." Iepe claimed the first middleweight chess boxing title in November 2003 after defeating "Luis The Lawyer" in Amsterdam.

A match consists of 11 rounds, with alternating rounds of chess and boxing. Rounds of chess last four minutes, rounds of boxing two minutes, with 60 seconds between rounds to change gear. Each match is decided by checkmate or violation of the 12-minute time limit (chess), knockout or referee decision (boxing), or concession (chess or boxing).

"The hardest part is the switch from boxing to chess," says Andreas Dilschneider, spokesman for the World Chess Boxing Organisation (WCBO, online at wcbo.org). "You have a very high pulse and high adrenaline, which makes it hard to play good chess. If you have a defensive boxing style, it's much easier in the chess rounds.

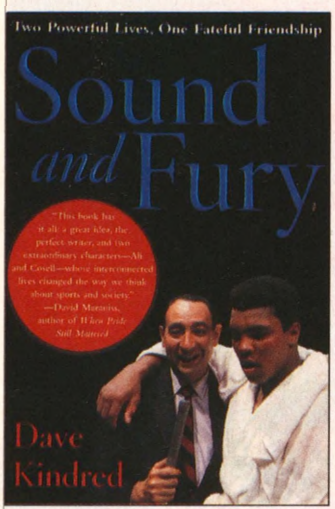
"Concentrating in one area won't work," he continued. "You will not survive."

—W. Eric Martin

Boxing Bookshelf

Dave Kindred's *Sound And Fury* (The Free Press, hardcover, 384 pages, $27.00) acts as a duel biography of Muhammad Ali and Howard Cosell. It's a good premise (we're surprised it took so long for someone to try it) and since Kindred knew both men, he offers some up-close-and-personal observations. But Kindred continues the strange trend of dumbing down Ali. It's become fashionable to think of Ali as a Forrest Gump type of character, a bumpkin caught in the middle of a controversial decade, and Kindred's book pushes Ali a bit further in that direction.

Surprisingly, Cosell comes off as the more interesting of the two. After all, Ali was handsome and spectacularly gifted at his chosen profession. Cosell was neither handsome nor gifted, yet he worked like a mule to become the most famous sports broadcaster in America. Maybe it's because we've heard the Ali story so many times that it's become stale, but Cosell's dogged rise to the top makes for better reading than Kindred's retelling of Ali's saga. Cosell's great love for his wife, Emmy, is also far more touching than any of Ali's stormy marriages.

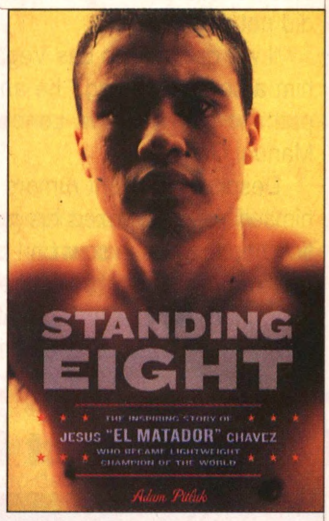


Kindred skips over the period in Cosell's career when Sugar Ray Leonard and Larry Holmes tried to duplicate Ali's role at his side (both failed) and focuses instead on the turgid history of *Monday Night Football*. That Kindred completely ignored Cosell being caught in the post Holmes-Renaldo Snipes fight skirmish is unpardonable. Still, the book succeeds in reminding us that today's fighters and broadcasters are a boring bunch compared to Ali and Cosell.

—Don Stradley

The status of immigration, legal or otherwise, is currently the hot topic in America, which makes Adam Pitluk's biography *Standing Eight: The Inspiring Story Of Jesus "El Matador" Chavez* ($24.95, 238 pages, De Capo Press) even more pertinent than it might otherwise have been had it been released at another time. Besides chronicling boxer Chavez' ups and downs, Pitluk's easy-to-read book is an excellent primer on what an immigrant may go through in his or her quest for a better life.

Chavez' story is well-known in boxing circles. Born Jesus Gabriel Sandoval Chavez (but going by Gabriel Sandoval as a child) in Mexico, he and his family waded across the Rio Grande under darkness, made their way north, and settled in Chicago. Chavez took up boxing and had a stellar amateur career, but still got caught up in the peer pressure of gang-related activity in Chicago, leading to a nearly four-year prison term for playing lookout during a grocery store robbery. As soon as he walked out of Stateville Prison's front door, Chavez was deported to Mexico.



Chavez' father, Jesus Sr., by then a legal resident, soon hatched a plan to illegally bring his son back to the U.S. for a second time. After sneaking across the border again, Chavez' pro boxing career began to blossom in his adopted town of Austin, Texas. But in 1997, he was deported again while trying to get a driver's license with a phony Social Security number.

Chavez finally made it back to the U.S. after boxing in Mexico during his four-year exile, obtaining legal residency and attaining his dream of winning a title belt, with a victory over Sirimongkol Singmanassuk for the WBC super featherweight crown in 2003.

Writer Pitluk does a good job conveying what Chavez has gone through during his lifelong quest for citizenship and success. The reader is provided with the story of the risks taken and the sacrifices made by illegal immigrants to come to this country. While many would say citizenship should be gained through legal means, Pitluk shows how for Chavez and many Mexicans, initially legal entry is simply not an option.

Anyone who knew Chavez before reading the bio would describe the boxer as a humble, courageous gentleman, and this book only confirms that opinion. The book, however, does seem to end abruptly after Chavez' victory over the ill-fated Leavander Johnson in September 2005 for the IBF lightweight title. One would have liked to have read more about how Johnson's death may have affected Chavez.

But the pluses far outweigh the minuses. Always interesting, at times moving, *Standing Eight* gives us a window into the world of a special fighter, the plight of illegal immigrants, and how we should not be so quick to judge who does or does not belong in America.

—Mike Greenhill

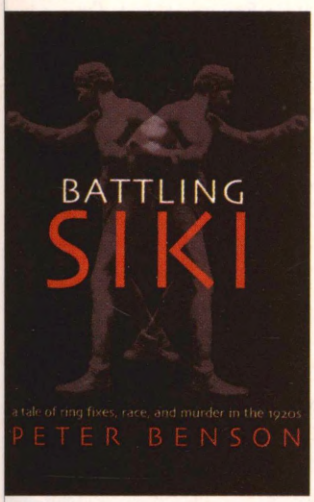
The derby to crown The Most Maligned Boxer of All-Time has a new top contender, thanks to *Battling Siki: A Tale Of Ring Fixes, Race, and Murder In The 1920s* (University of Arkansas Press, 334 pages, hardcover, $29.95). Author Peter Benson's case isn't as airtight as his righteous indignation and professorial hauteur would have us think, but his impressive research makes it clear that the

"Singular Senegalese," who occupied the light heavyweight throne in 1922, was, if not singularly abused, at least thoroughly slandered by the popular and lasting depiction of Siki as a "preposterous man-beast" at large in a world too civilized for the likes of him.

"The international press portrayed Battling Siki in the same style as P.T. Barnum had touted his sideshow attraction the 'Wild Man Of Borneo,'" wrote Benson. In fact, Siki—born Amadon M'barick Fall, in Saint-Louis, Senegal—was a decorated hero of World War I who spoke five languages and "wasn't guilty of two-thirds of the misconduct attributed to him."

Taken at age 10 to France by a woman who subsequently abandoned him, Fall began fighting as a teenager under the name Battling Siki, and on September 24, 1922, he went into his title match against French idol Georges Carpentier with the understanding that Siki would take a dive in the fourth round. But he knocked Carpentier out instead.

Six months later, Siki lost the belt to Mike McTigue in Dublin on St. Patrick's Day, and ever since, ring historians have chortled about the poor black bastard so dumb he risked his title against an Irishman in Ireland on the country's biggest holiday. But Benson shows convincingly that Siki had no other viable options.



When Siki came to America shortly thereafter, Benson wrote, "The U.S. press, once it had gotten over its initial hair-raising astonishment and racial anxiety, [took] up Siki as a running gag, building up the least bit of mischief the young man got into."

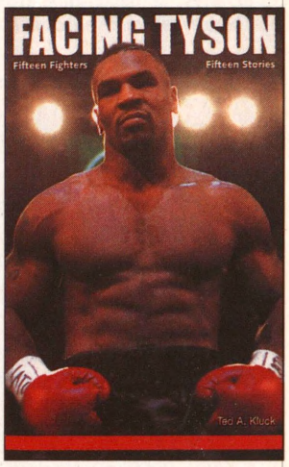
That's laying it on with a shovel, since Siki got into plenty of "mischief" and even once himself admitted that since "to the whole world, I am a savage ... I sometimes let them believe that." But Benson provides plenty of trumped-up and made-up examples to bolster his argument. What doesn't help, though, is when he himself conjures up malignant conversations between people as Benson imagines they might've taken place, and his portrayal of just about everybody who came into contact with his "soft-spoken, articulate ... quick to smile, patient under abuse" subject as evil or out to royally screw him. Nat Fleischer, founder of this magazine, gets a good working over, although Benson doesn't accuse him, as he does Young Stribling, of being a "darling of the Ku Klux Klan."

For all that, Benson's book is one of the most comprehensive and intriguing boxing biographies in recent memory, and deserves high marks for refurbishing the image of a worthwhile and worthy champion.

—Pete Ehrmann

Briefly Noted

In 2003, author Stephen Brunt published a well-received book called *Facing Ali*, which documented the stories of 15 fighters who fought "The Greatest." Now comes *Facing Tyson: Fifteen Fighters, Fifteen Stories* (The Lyons Press, 272 pages, hardcover, $22.95), a similar if somewhat less-successful endeavor by Ted A. Kluck.

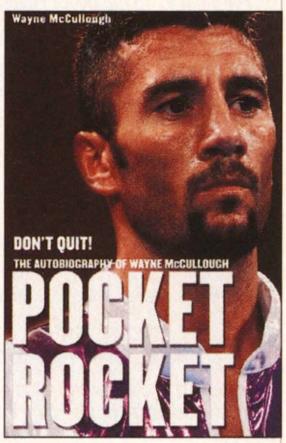


A relative tenderfoot on the boxing beat, Kluck goes to great lengths to track down and interview his subjects, but the results are mixed. Some of Iron Mike's better-known foes, such as Evander Holyfield and Lennox Lewis, contribute little we don't already know. Others—Sammy Scaff, Jose Ribalta, Tyrell Biggs, Lou Savarese, Buster Mathis Jr., Pinklon Thomas—provide fresh insight and new anecdotes.

Also revealing are the chapters about fighters who wouldn't cooperate: Peter McNeeley and Mitch "Blood" Green wanted money to talk, Larry Holmes was too busy, and Andrew Golota, well, let's just say Kluck never got close enough to the "Foul Pole" to need a protective cup.

◆◆◆

Former WBC bantamweight titleholder and current RING correspondent Wayne McCullough has authored *Pocket Rocket: Don't Quit! The Autobiography Of Wayne McCullough* (Mainstream Publishing, 236 pages, paperback, £9.99; available in the U.S. via online bookstores such as borders.com for $12). McCullough writes the same way he fights, straight ahead, no punches pulled. The book starts with his hardscrabble childhood in Belfast and ends shortly after his most recent bout, a 12th-round TKO loss to Oscar Larios in July 2005.



McCullough's underdog mindset is evident throughout, but, like most fighters, he's been through hard times and probably has cause for complaint. While many questions are left unanswered, such as why he stayed loyal to promoter Mat Tinley after allegedly being shortchanged on a number of purses, McCullough is far more enlightening when writing about his inner demons. He candidly tells how he successfully battled depression and suicidal thoughts with the help of therapy and also about his estrangement from his parents.

All in all, *Pocket Rocket* is a good read for the general boxing audience—and a *must* read for McCullough fans.

—Nigel Collins

TV Fights of the Month

DATE	WINNER/LOSER	NETWORK	DIVISION	SIGNIFICANCE	MATCHUP	RESULT
4/26/06	Allan Green KO 4 Donnie McCrary	ESPN2	sm	B-	C-	B-
The only guy more shocked than Green when he went down was McCrary						
4/28/06	Brian Minto W 8 Billy Zumbrun	ESPN2	h	C-	B-	C+
Hey, he's no Joe Mesi, but Minto can fight a little						
4/28/06	Sam Peter KO 2 Julius Long	ESPN2	h	B	C-	F
Peter has more trouble bending over to lace up his shoes than he did with Long; what a waste of size						
4/28/06	Lamont Peterson W 10 Mario Jose Ramos	Showtime	jw	C+	C	C
Yes, yes, Lamont, we know you can jab; what else ya' got?						
4/28/06	Anthony Peterson KO 3 Jermain White	Showtime	jw	C+	C	C+
Oh, so this is the exciting brother; now we get it						
4/29/06	Acelino Freitas W 12 Zahir Raheem	HBO	l	B-	B	D
Regardless of who you think won, we must all agree never to speak of this fight again						
5/3/06	Sharmba Mitchell W 10 Jose Luis Cruz	ESPN2	w	C+	C	C
Mitchell still good enough to beat Cruz, who is slower than global warming						
5/4/06	Alfonso Gomez D 8 Jesse Feliciano	ESPN	w	B-	A-	A
This could be a solid contender, no pun intended, for Fight of the Year						
5/4/06	Sergio Mora KO 10 Archek Termeliksatien	ESPN	m	B-	B-	B+
If you haven't seen the resemblance yet between Mora and Max Kellerman, there's no hope for you						
5/5/06	Juan Manuel Buendia KO 4 Alexis Divison	Showtime	jm	C+	C	C+
Now we know Divison: He does well for two rounds then folds; watch his schedule fill up						
5/5/06	Glenn Donaire W 12 Cesar Lopez	Showtime	fl	B-	B+	C+
Donaire a real puncher; Lopez more skilled, but never really had a chance						
5/6/06	Joan Guzman W 10 Javier Jauregui	HBO PPV	l	C+	B-	C
Guzman is clearly gifted, but where's the fire?						
5/6/06	Kassim Ouma W 12 Marco Antonio Rubio	HBO PPV	jm	B+	B	C-
Note to Dalby Shirley: the Home is calling						
5/6/06	Oscar De La Hoya KO 6 Ricardo Mayorga	HBO PPV	jm	A+	B+	B+
That pounding you hear is Vernon Forrest banging his head against a wall						
5/6/06	Luis Perez W 12 Dimitri Kirilov	Showtime	jb	A-	C+	B-
Perez had his moments, but to us this looked like one of the worst decisions of the year						
5/6/06	Jose Antonio Rivera W 12 Alejandro Garcia	Showtime	jm	B-	B+	B-
Hard not to be happy for Rivera here; plucky bastard						
5/10/06	Joe Spina KO 11 Jesse Brinkley	ESPN2	sm	C	B	C+
Did Brinkley do a single situp prepping for this one?						
5/12/06	Edner Cherry KO 11 Monty Meza-Clay	ESPN2	l	C+	C+	B-
Hey, what's the record for consecutive left-uppercut, right-cross combinations?						
5/13/06	Ricky Hatton W 12 Luis Collazo	HBO	w	A+	B+	C
Ricky: Run—don't walk—back to junior welterweight						
5/17/06	Andre Berto KO 3 Gerardo Prieto	ESPN2	jm	C	D-	D
Sorry, we're not on the bandwagon until Berto beats someone who isn't terrified of him						
5/17/06	Emanuel Augustus W 8 Marteze Logan	ESPN2	jw	C+	B	C+
More and more, Augustus looks like our generation's Ralph "Tiger" Jones						
5/17/06	Jose Navarro W 12 Vernie Torres	ESPN2	b	B-	C-	C+
If you want to know why Navarro doesn't get the nod in big fights, look no further; he punches like he's apologizing for it						
5/19/06	Alejandro Barrio KO 6 Yusef Mack	ESPN2	sm	B-	B	B+
Who else dove for the mute button 20 seconds into Michael Moorer's expert analysis?						
5/20/06	Jorge Barrios KO 1 Janos Nagy	HBO	jl	B+	B-	D
Isn't "La Hiena" a great nickname for Barrios? As much as "The Bonecracker" is a poor one for Nagy?						
5/20/06	Marco Antonio Barrera W 12 Rocky Juarez	HBO	jl	A+	B+	B+
We'll bet Barrera wishes he could just fight Erik Morales a couple of times a year and to hell with these young guys						

Category Explanation: "Significance"—The importance of the bout to the division and the fighters' futures; "Matchup"—The quality of the fighters and the prefight determination of how their styles will mesh; "Result"—How the bout turned out, from the viewer's perspective.

(RING championship fights in **bold** type)

Division key: h—heavyweight; c—cruiserweight; lh—light heavyweight; sm—super middleweight; m—middleweight; jm—junior middleweight; w—welterweight; jw—junior welterweight; l—lightweight; jl—junior lightweight; f—featherweight; jf—junior featherweight; b—bantamweight; jb—junior bantamweight; fl—flyweight; jfl—junior flyweight; s—strawweight

Network key: PPV—Pay-Per-View; Show—Showtime; FOXSN—Fox Sports Net; Uni—Univision; Telef—Telefutura; Telem—Telemundo; HBO L—HBO Latino

The Other Shoe Drops

Exactly a month after the corner-emptying brawl that erupted during the 10th round of the Floyd Mayweather-Zab Judah bout, the Nevada State Athletic Commission came down hard on Judah, fining him $250,000 and revoking his Nevada boxing license. Under federal law, Judah will not be allowed to fight in the United States until April 8, 2007.

Judah's punishment was for the rabbit punch he landed after doubling over Mayweather with a blow to the groin and for joining the melee that ensued soon afterward. Judah sounded unrepentant.

"I'm sorry for everything that happened," said Judah, "but if I'm ever put in the same situation where my father is in jeopardy, I'm going to do the same thing again."

Judah's father-trainer, Yoel, was fined $100,000 and had his cornerman's license revoked for a year for entering the ring and throwing a punch at Mayweather's uncle and trainer, Roger Mayweather. Roger, who was first to enter the ring after his nephew was fouled, had been fined $200,000 and had his license revoked for one year at an April 13 hearing.

Promoter Don King pleaded for leniency for his fighter, but commission members were unimpressed.

"You took it to an outrageous level by running in there in the end and punching," commissioner Joe Brown told Zab. "You're a recidivist in this state. You've done this before. I believe we have to punish you greater than anyone else here."

Brown was referring to a 2001 incident when Judah was fined $75,000 and suspended for six months for throwing a stool and shoving his glove into referee Jay Nady's throat after Nady stopped Judah's fight with Kostya Tszyu.

The NSAC also fined Mayweather cornerman Leonard Ellerbe $50,000 and suspended him for four months for entering the ring during the fracas.

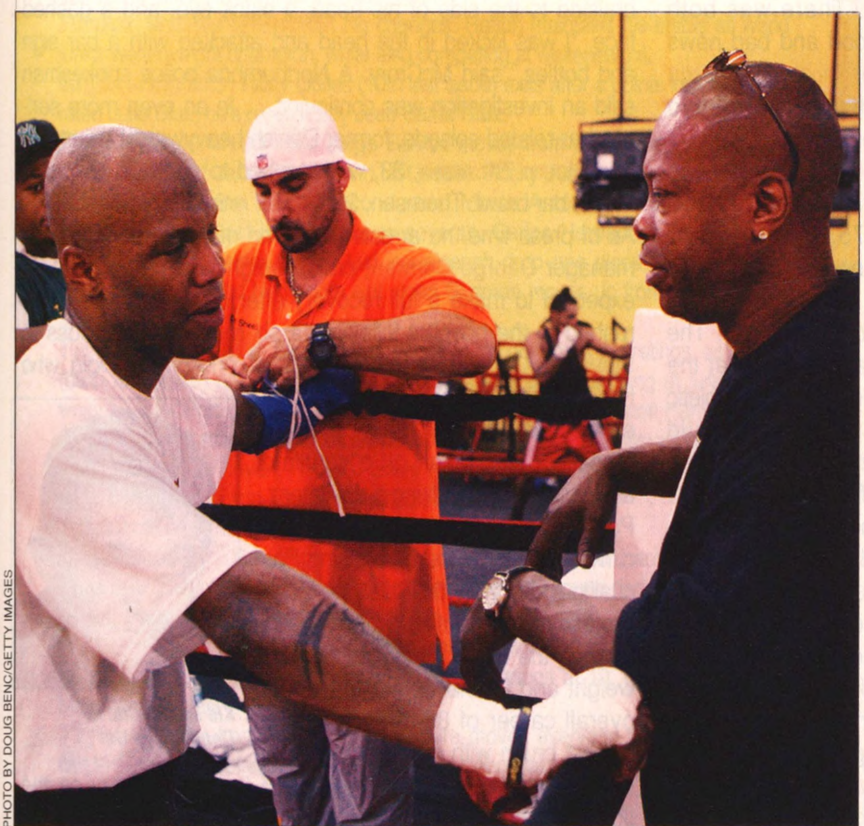
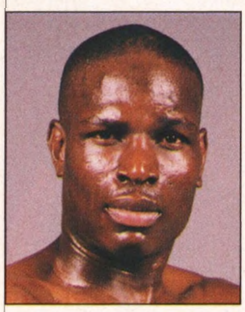


PHOTO BY DOUG BENC/GETTY IMAGES

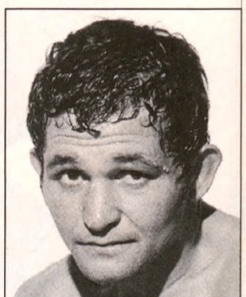
Zab and Yoel Judah were both fined and had their licenses revoked

Outside the Ropes

If only **Ricky Hatton**'s demanding bout with **Luis Collazo** at Boston's TC Banknorth Garden had gone as smoothly as the Englishman's prefight visit to **Suffolk Downs**. New England's only thoroughbred racetrack named the 10th race of the day the "Ricky Hitman Hatton Classic." Hatton bet $50 on 6 to 1 underdog City Clerk—and won! He picked that particular horse because it's name was similar to his favorite soccer team, Manchester City ... In early-May, weatherman **Grant Denyer** outpointed former junior welterweight world champion **Kostya Tszyu**, 36-33, to win the fourth season of Australia's version of *Dancing With The Stars* ... The Guyana Boxing Board has withheld the purse of former WBA welterweight titleholder **Andrew "Six Heads" Lewis** pending an investigation of an incident that took place during his fight with **Denny Dalton** at the National Park in Georgetown. Ahead on all three judges' scorecards, Lewis suddenly surrendered and quickly left the ring 37 seconds into the seventh round. "I just wanted to get out and go to the toilet," said Lewis. "I preferred to lose than mess myself in front of all those people. Everybody saw I was beating the hell out of Dalton. I was trying to hold in the stuff, but in the seventh round I couldn't no more, so I decided to quit." Lewis blamed his problem on a milkshake he drank the afternoon of the fight ... There was both good and bad news for **Ricardo Mayorga** following his kayo loss to **Oscar De La Hoya**. The good news was that the fight sold 875,000 pay-per-views and he's in for a share of each sale above 600,000. The bad news if that the Nevada State Athletic Commission could fine the Nicaraguan after finding traces of the diuretic Furosemide, also known as Lasix, in his system. Perhaps not so coincidentally, former junior featherweight champion and Nicaraguan **Rosendo Alvarez** also tested positive for the Furosemide following his knockout loss to **Jorge Arce** and has been fined $2,000 by the NSAC. "We're thinking there must be a trainer or physician in Nicaragua that is recommending this for boxers," said Alan Hopper, spokesman for Don King, who promotes both Mayorga and Alvarez ... That British fighters and pubs are a bad mix was demonstrated yet again in several recent incidences. In April, featherweight contender **Scott Harrison** was arrested after a disturbance at the Counting House pub in Glasgow and charged with breach of peace, refusing to leave a licensed premises, resisting arrest, and police assault. According to the BBC, police officers had to use CS gas in order to restrain the boxer. Harrison was arrested again in May after another alcohol-fueled incident at a club near Loch Lomond. This led to the cancellation of his May 20 WBO featherweight title defense against **Gary St. Clair** in Belfast. Harrison has since been admitted to the Priory Hospital, seeking help for depression and alcohol problems. "If we hadn't addressed the problem, Scott could have ended up out there on the streets without any friends, in the gutter, without any money, or, who knows, even dead," said Harrsion's manager, **Frank Maloney**. In another distasteful alcohol-related event, former IBF cruiserweight titleholder **Glenn McCrory** was beaten by a gang of 11 men at a pub near his home in Newcastle upon Tyne. The 41-year-old McCrory, who now works for Sky Sports as a boxing broadcaster, was brutally assaulted when he tried to help the pub doorman, who was attacked after he asked the unruly group to leave. McCrory was taken to a hospital after suffering massive bruising to the side of his head, a black eye, and a gashed face. "I was kicked in the head and attacked with a bar sign and bottles," said McCrory. A Northumbria police spokesman said an investigation was continuing ... In an even more serious bar-related episode, former Danish heavyweight champion **Tue Bjoern Thomsen**, 33, was stabbed to death in a Copenhagen bar brawl. Thomsen, 22-1-1 (9), retired in October 2002. As of press time, no arrests had been made ... According to manager **George Carman**, cruiserweight **Valery Odin**, 31, is expected to make a full recovery after collapsing and being rushed to the hospital following a six-round decision loss to **Steven McGuire** in Hartlepool, England, on April 28. Odin, who has lost 10 of his last 11 bouts, apparently suffered a small blood clot on the brain, but was taken off a ventilator and sitting up and talking a day later ... Paraguay's **Kid Pascualito**, 64, died of cirrhosis in May. The hard-hitting Pascualito (born Valentin Galeano) fought professionally from 1957 until 1976, winning the South American bantamweight and featherweight titles in an overall career of 85-26-20 (59). His closest brush with greatness came in 1971, when he had Mexican legend **Ruben Olivares** on the floor and hurt during a bout held in Inglewood, California. Olivares, however, rebounded to stop "El Kid" in the ninth round.



Lewis: Gastric distress



Kid Pascualito: Dead at age 64

Quotable

"What this panel means is that Nevada could care less about their boxers. It just seems like one of these feel-good things where you come out with a report and make a little splash in the newspapers. Then everybody goes back to business as usual."

—Tim Lueckenhoff, president of the Association of Boxing Commissioners, commenting on the Nevada State Athletic Commission's three-man—Sig Rogich, Luther Mack, and James Nave—advisory committee's lack of meaningful progress

"When I decide, it will be for good. I won't miss the limelight, being in the ring, the cheers. It's been great, but I'm not hungry for it."

—Oscar De La Hoya, pondering life after boxing

[Ratings Analysis]

For Period Ended May 21, 2006

Heavyweights: No changes.
Cruiserweights: No changes.
Light heavyweights: Fabrice Tiozzo (fifth last issue) leaves due to inactivity. Everyone from five through 10 moves up one place, opening up a slot for Prince Badi Ajamu at 10.
Super middleweights: No changes.
Middleweights: No changes.
Junior middleweights: Oscar De La Hoya enters at five, based on his convincing win over Ricardo Mayorga. De La Hoya's inclusion drops everyone previously ranked fifth through eighth one place each. Javier Castillejo (ninth last issue) departs to campaign at middleweight, while Rodney Jones (10th last issue) exits, replaced by Jose Antonio Rivera, who recently decisioned Alejandro Garcia.
Welterweights: Ricky Hatton debuts at four, thanks to his narrow points victory over Luis Collazo (fourth last issue). Collazo drops to five, causing Arturo Gatti (fifth last issue) and Kermit Cintron (sixth last issue) to fall one spot each. Sharmba Mitchell enters the ratings at nine, based on his unanimous decision over Jose Luis Cruz, dropping Thomas Damgaard (ninth last issue) to 10. Jose Antonio Rivera (seventh last issue) departs after moving to junior middleweight. Mark Suarez (10th last issue) exits to make room for Mitchell.
Junior welterweights: No changes. Hatton maintains his status as world junior welterweight champion, while also competing at welterweight.
Lightweights: Ricky Quiles (10th last issue) exits after a points loss to fourth-rated Julio Diaz; he's replaced by Jose Santa Cruz.
Junior lightweights: Jorge Barrios moves from six to five after his one-round blowout of Janos Nagy (10th last issue). Rocky Juarez debuts at six due to his narrow decision loss to second-rated Marco Antonio Barrera. Yodsanan Nanthachai (fifth last issue) sinks to seventh. Carlos Hernandez (seventh last issue) and Alex Arthur (eighth last issue) each drop one place. Robbie Peden (ninth last issue) and Nagy both exit. Joan Guzman moves up from featherweight and debuts at 10.
Featherweights: Significant changes at the bottom of the ratings, as Juarez (sixth last issue) and Guzman (ninth last issue) are now fighting at junior lightweight. Victor Polo (eighth last issue) departs due to inactivity. Scott Harrison (seventh last issue) moves up to six, while Spend Abazi (10th last issue) jumps three places to number seven. Hiroyuki Enoki returns at eight, followed by newcomers Nicky Cook at nine and Thomas Mashaba at 10.
Junior featherweights: No changes.
Bantamweights: Irene Pacheco moves up from junior bantamweight and takes over 10th place after handing Heriberto Ruiz a 12-round decision defeat as a 118-pounder. Wladimir Sidorenko (10th last issue) exits.
Junior bantamweights: After losing a close, controversial decision to third-rated Luis Perez, Dimitri Kirilov enters the ratings at 10, replacing Mbwana Matumla (10th last issue).
Flyweights: Irene Pacheco's departure moves everyone previously ranked fifth to 10th up one place each. Daisuke Naito debuts at 10.
Junior flyweights: No changes.
Strawweights: No changes.
Pound-for-pound: No changes.

The RING
"THE BIBLE OF BOXING"

Pound-For-Pound

1. **Floyd Mayweather**
   Welterweight
2. **Winky Wright**
   Middleweight
3. **Manny Pacquiao**
   Junior Lightweight
4. **Marco Antonio Barrera**
   Junior Lightweight
5. **Rafael Marquez**
   Bantamweight
6. **Ricky Hatton**
   Junior Welterweight
7. **Jose Luis Castillo**
   Junior Welterweight
8. **Antonio Tarver**
   Light Heavyweight
9. **Joe Calzaghe**
   Super Middleweight
10. **Pongsaklek Wonjongkam**
    Flyweight

For weekly updated Ring ratings, go to **TheRing-online.com**

The Ring Ratings

For Period Ended May 21, 2006

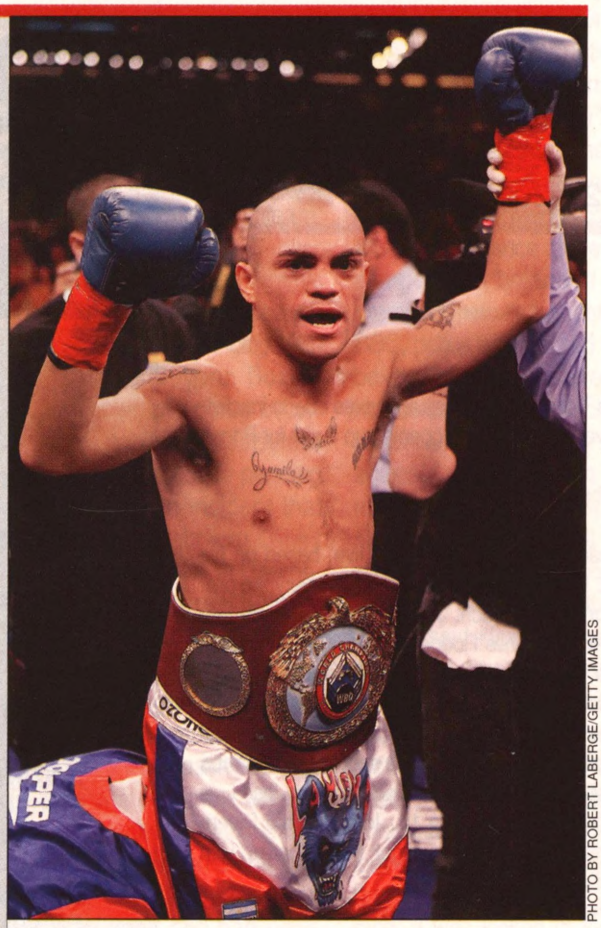


PHOTO BY ROBERT LABERGE/GETTY IMAGES

Barrios skips to fifth at junior lightweight after knocking out Nagy

How Our Ratings Are Compiled

Fighters recognized as champions by The Ring are rated at the top of their division, with the top 10 contenders listed below.

Championship vacancies can be filled by winning a box-off between The Ring's number-one and number-two contenders, or, in certain instances, a box-off between our number-one and number-three contenders.

The only three occasions when a fighter will lose his championship status are when he retires, moves to another weight division, or is defeated in a championship bout.

Ratings By The Editors

Heavyweights

Weight Unlimited

Champ: Vacant

1. **WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO** Ukraine 46-3 (41)
2. **HASIM RAHMAN** Baltimore, MD 41-5-2 (33)
3. **JAMES TONEY** Ann Arbor, MI 69-4-3 (43)
4. **SERGEI LIAKHOVICH** Belarus, 23-1 (14)
5. **LAMON BREWSTER** Los Angeles, CA 33-3 (29)
6. **JOHN RUIZ** Methuen, MA 41-6-1 (28)
7. **CHRIS BYRD** Flint, MI 39-3-1 (20)
8. **CALVIN BROCK** Charlotte, NC 28-0 (22)
9. **SAMUEL PETER** Las Vegas, NV 26-1 (22)
10. **NICOLAY VALUEV** Russia 43-0 (31)

Jr. Middleweights

Weight Limit: 154 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **ROMAN KARMAZIN** Russia 34-1-1 (21)
2. **KASSIM OUMA** W. Palm Beach, FL 24-2-1 (15)
3. **SHANE MOSLEY** Pomona, CA 42-4 (36)
4. **SERGEI DZINDZIRUK** Germany 31-0 (21)
5. **OSCAR DE LA HOYA** Los Angeles, CA 38-4 (30)
6. **FERNANDO VARGAS** Oxnard, CA 26-3 (22)
7. **IKE QUARTEY** Ghana 37-2-1 (31)
8. **VERNO PHILLIPS** Aurora, CO 39-10-1 (20)
9. **DANIEL SANTOS** Puerto Rico 29-3-1 (20
10. **JOSE ANTONIO RIVERA** Worcester, MA 38-4-1(24)

Featherweights

Weight Limit: 126 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **CHRIS JOHN** Indonesia 37-0-1 (20)
2. **TAKASHI KOSHIMOTO** Japan 39-1-2 (17)
3. **JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ** Mexico 44-3-1 (33)
4. **HUMBERTO SOTO** Mexico 38-5-2 (22)
5. **INJIN CHI** South Korea 30-3-1 (18)
6. **SCOTT HARRISON** Scotland 25-2-2 (14)
7. **SPEND ABAZI** Denmark 32-1 (10)
8. **HIROYUKI ENOKI** Japan 24-0-1 (18)
9. **NICKY COOK** England 26-0 (15)
10. **THOMAS MASHABA** South Africa 17-1-4 (10)

Jr. Featherweights

Weight Limit: 122 pounds

Champ: ISRAEL VAZQUEZ Mexico 39-3 (29)

1. **SOMSAK SITHCHATCHAWAL** Thailand 46-1-1 (37)
2. **OSCAR LARIOS** Mexico 56-4-1 (36)
3. **CELESTINO CABALLERO** Panama 24-2 (17)
4. **POONSAWAT KRATINGAENGYM** Thailand 24-0 (15)
5. **RICARDO CORDOBA** Panama 27-1-1 (18)
6. **SERGIO MANUEL MEDINA** Argentina 25-0 (15)
7. **GABULA VABAZA** South Africa 23-0-1 (5)
8. **STEVE MOLITOR** Canada 22-0 (8)
9. **DANIEL PONCE DE LEON** Mexico 27-1 (25)
10. **RIKIYA FUKUHARA** Japan 18-1-1(14)

Bantamweights

Weight Limit: 118 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **RAFAEL MARQUEZ** Mexico 35-3 (31)
2. **HOZUMI HASEGAWA** Japan 20-2 (7)
3. **JHONNY GONZALEZ** Mexico 32-4 (28)
4. **VEERAPOL SAHAPROM** Thailand 50-3-2 (35)
5. **SILENCE MABUZA** South Africa 18-1 (15)
6. **GENARO GARCIA** Mexico 34-4 (20)
7. **CRUZ CARVAJAL** Mexico 25-13-1 (21)
8. **RICARDO VARGAS** Mexico 39-11-3 (13)
9. **RATANACHAI VORAPIN** Thailand 65-9 (42)
10. **IRENE PACHECO** Colombia 32-1 (24)

Cruiserweights
Weight Limit: 200 pounds

Champ: O'NEIL BELL
Atlanta, GA 26-1-1 (24)

1. **GUILLERMO JONES**
Panama 33-3-2 (26)
2. **STEVE CUNNINGHAM**
Philadelphia, PA 19-0 (10)
3. **JEAN-MARC MORMECK**
France 31-3 (21)
4. **JOHNNY NELSON**
England 45-12-2 (29)
5. **CARL THOMPSON**
England 34-6 (25)
6. **WAYNE BRAITHWAITE**
Guyana 21-2 (17)
7. **DALE BROWN**
Canada 35-4-1 (22)
8. **PIETRO AURINO**
Italy 34-2 (16)
9. **DAVID HAYE**
England 16-1 (16)
10. **KRZYSZTOF WLODARCZYK**
Poland 35-1 (26)

Light Heavyweights
Weight Limit: 175 pounds

Champ: ANTONIO TARVER
Orlando, FL 24-3 (18)

1. **GLEN JOHNSON**
Miami, FL 44-10-2 (29)
2. **ZSOLT ERDEI**
Hungary 24-0 (15)
3. **ROY JONES**
Pensacola, FL 49-4 (38)
4. **CLINTON WOODS**
England 39-3-1 (24)
5. **TOMASZ ADAMEK**
Poland 30-0 (21)
6. **JULIO GONZALEZ**
Huntington Beach, CA 39-3 (23)
7. **PAUL BRIGGS**
Australia 24-2 (18)
8. **HUGO GARAY**
Argentina 26-2 (13)
9. **ERIC HARDING**
West Hartford, CT 23-3-1 (7)
10. **PRINCE BADI AJAMU**
Camden, NJ 25-2-1 (14)

Super Middleweights
Weight Limit: 168 pounds

Champ: JOE CALZAGHE
Wales 41-0 (31)

1. **MIKKEL KESSLER**
Denmark 37-0 (28)
2. **MARKUS BEYER**
Germany 34-2-1 (13)
3. **ANTHONY MUNDINE**
Australia 26-3 (20)
4. **DANNY GREEN**
Australia 21-3 (19)
5. **JEFF LACY**
St. Petersburg, FL 21-1 (17)
6. **MANNY SIACA**
Puerto Rico 20-5 (18)
7. **LIBRADO ANDRADE**
Mexico 23-0 (17)
8. **MGER MKRTCHIAN**
Aremenia 23-2 (17)
9. **LUCIAN BUTE**
Canada 16-0 (15)
10. **ROBIN REID**
England 38-5-1 (27)

Middleweights
Weight Limit: 160 pounds

Champ: JERMAIN TAYLOR
Little Rock, AR 25-0 (17)

1. **WINKY WRIGHT**
St. Petersburg, FL 50-3 (25)
2. **BERNARD HOPKINS**
Philadelphia, PA 46-4-1 (32)
3. **ARTHUR ABRAHAM**
Germany 21-0 (17)
4. **FELIX STURM**
Germany 25-1 (11)
5. **SAM SOLIMAN**
Australia 32-8 (13)
6. **EDISON MIRANDA**
Colombia 26-0 (23)
7. **SEBASTIAN SYLVESTER**
Germany 21-1 (9)
8. **KINGSLEY IKEKE**
Canada 23-2 (13)
9. **SCOTT DANN**
England 24-2 (17)
10. **KELLY PAVLIK**
Youngstown, OH 27-0 (24)

Welterweights
Weight Limit: 147 pounds

Champ: CARLOS BALDOMIR
Argentina 42-9-6 (12)

1. **FLOYD MAYWEATHER**
Grand Rapids, MI 36-0 (24)
2. **ANTONIO MARGARITO**
Mexico 33-4 (24)
3. **ZAB JUDAH**
Brooklyn, NY 34-4 (25)
4. **RICKY HATTON**
England 41-0 (30)
5. **LUIS COLLAZO**
Queens, NY 26-2 (12)
6. **ARTURO GATTI**
Jersey City, NJ 40-7 (31)
7. **KERMIT CINTRON**
Reading, PA 26-1 (24)
8. **OKTAY URKAL**
Germany 36-3 (11)
9. **SHARMBA MITCHELL**
Washington, D.C. 57-5 (30)
10. **THOMAS DAMGAARD**
Denmark 37-1 (27)

Jr. Welterweights
Weight Limit: 140 pounds

Champ: RICKY HATTON
England 41-0 (30)

1. **MIGUEL COTTO**
Puerto Rico 26-0 (22)
2. **KOSTYA TSZYU**
Australia 31-2 (25)
3. **JOSE LUIS CASTILLO**
Mexico 54-7-1 (47)
4. **JUNIOR WITTER**
England 33-1-2 (19)
5. **CARLOS MAUSSA**
Colombia 19-3 (16)
6. **VIVIAN HARRIS**
Brooklyn, NY 26-2-1 (17)
7. **DeMARCUS CORLEY**
Washington, D.C. 31-4-1 (17)
8. **LOVEMORE NDOU**
Australia 41-8-1 (26)
9. **STEVE JOHNSTON**
Vero Beach, FL 39-3-1 (18)
10. **SOULEYMANE M'BAYE**
France 33-1 (18)

Lightweights
Weight Limit: 135 pounds

Champ: DIEGO CORRALES
Las Vegas, NV 40-3 (33)

1. **JOEL CASAMAYOR**
Miami, FL 32-3-1 (20)
2. **JUAN LAZCANO**
El Paso, TX 36-3-1 (27)
3. **JUAN DIAZ**
Houston, TX 29-0 (14)
4. **JULIO DIAZ**
Coachella, CA 33-3 (24)
5. **ACELINO FREITAS**
Brazil 38-1 (32)
6. **ZAHIR RAHEEM**
Las Vegas, NV 27-2 (16)
7. **JESUS CHAVEZ**
Mexico 42-3 (29)
8. **ISAAC HLATSHWAYO**
South Africa 24-0 (9)
9. **LAVKA SIM**
Mongolia 21-4-1 (18)
10. **JOSE SANTA CRUZ**
Lincoln Heights, CA 23-1 (13)

Jr. Lightweights
Weight Limit: 130 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MANNY PACQUIAO**
Philippines 41-3-2 (32)
2. **MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA**
Mexico 62-4 (42)
3. **ERIK MORALES**
Mexico 48-4 (34)
4. **VICENTE MOSQUERA**
Panama 24-1-1 (12)
5. **JORGE BARRIOS**
Argentina 46-2-1 (33)
6. **ROCKY JUAREZ**
Houston, TX 26-2 (19)
7. **YODSANAN NANTHACHAI**
Thailand 46-3-1 (37)
8. **CARLOS HERNANDEZ**
Bellflower, CA 41-6-1 (24)
9. **ALEX ARTHUR**
Scotland 23-1 (17)
10. **JOAN GUZMAN**
Dominican Republic 25-0 (17)

Jr. Bantamweights
Weight Limit: 115 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MARTIN CASTILLO**
Mexico 30-1 (16)
2. **MASAMORI TOKUYAMA**
North Korea 32-3-1 (8)
3. **LUIS PEREZ**
Nicaragua 24-1 (15)
4. **FERNANDO MONTIEL**
Mexico 32-1-1 (24)
5. **ALEXANDER MUNOZ**
Venezuela 28-2 (26)
6. **KATSUSHIGE KAWASHIMA**
Japan 29-4 (19)
7. **HAWK MAKEPULA**
South Africa 28-3 (18)
8. **JOSE NAVARRO**
Los Angeles, CA 23-2 (10)
9. **GERRY PENALOSA**
Philippines 49-5-2 (33)
10. **DIMITRI KIRILOV**
Russia 28-3 (9)

Flyweights
Weight Limit: 112 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **PONGSAKLEK WONJONGKAM**
Thailand 61-2 (31)
2. **LORENZO PARRA**
Venezuela 27-0 (17)
3. **VIC DARCHINYAN**
Australia 25-0 (20)
4. **JORGE ARCE**
Mexico 44-3-1 (34)
5. **OMAR NARVAEZ**
Argentina 19-0-2 (13)
6. **BRAHIM ASLOUM**
France 19-1 (7)
7. **TAKEFUMI SAKATA**
Japan 24-3-1 (10)
8. **VICTOR BURGOS**
Mexico 39-14-3 (22)
9. **LUIS MALDONADO**
Mexico 33-0-1 (25)
10. **DAISUKE NAITO**
Japan 28-2-2 (19)

Jr. Flyweights
Weight Limit: 108 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **ROBERTO VASQUEZ**
Panama 22-1 (17)
2. **HUGO CAZARES**
Mexico 22-3-1 (16)
3. **NELSON DIEPPA**
Puerto Rico 22-2-2 (13)
4. **ULISES SOLIS**
Mexico 21-1 (16)
5. **BRIAN VILORIA**
Waipahu, HI 19-0 (12)
6. **WILL GRIGSBY**
St. Paul, MN 18-4-1 (11)
7. **JOSE AGUIRRE**
Mexico 33-4-1 (20)
8. **NABUAKI MASUDA**
Japan 21-3 (3)
9. **EDGAR SOSA**
Mexico 22-5 (12)
10. **MUVHUSO NEDZANNI**
South Africa 14-1-3 (9)

Strawweights
Weight Limit: 105 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **IVAN CALDERON**
Puerto Rico 26-0 (6)
2. **YUTAKA NIIDA**
Japan 20-1-3 (8)
3. **MUHAMMAD RACHMAN**
Indonesia 51-7-4 (23)
4. **EAGLE KYOWA**
Japan 16-1 (6)
5. **KATSUNARI TAKAYAMA**
Japan 15-2 (7)
6. **JUAN LANDAETA**
Venezuela 19-3-1 (16)
7. **OMAR SOTO**
Mexico 14-3-1 (10)
8. **DANIEL REYES**
Colombia 35-4-1 (30)
9. **RODEL MAYOL**
Philippines 22-1 (17)
10. **ISAAC BUSTOS**
Mexico 24-8-3 (13)

By Jeff Ryan

Roger The DQ Dodger

Never mind what this commissioner, that head of officials, or yet another gullible wordsmith waxing poetic wants you to believe. Here's the truth: In sports, the playing field is rarely level. In some cases, it's so tilted that Lance Armstrong would get winded trying to peddle his bike from one end of it to the other.

Home teams enjoy the benefit of the whistle during the NBA playoffs, veteran pitchers get a few extra inches of the plate to work with, and everything from dead spots in the hardwood to watered-down base paths to JumboTrons flashing distracting images during the visiting team's field-goal attempts are commonplace. In boxing, the titled playing field often reveals itself not in the application of too much resin to the canvas, but in the failure to apply the rulebook fairly in every situation.

Such was the case in the Floyd Mayweather-Zab Judah showdown, a matchup, by the way, that was about as eagerly anticipated by this columnist as root canal the day after jury duty. No doubt angered by promoter Bob Arum's stubborn insistence that the fight go on even after "Stupor," *uh,* "Super" Judah was upset by Carlos Baldomir in his previous bout, the gods of pugilism decided to sprinkle this matchup with controversy, the equivalent of blowing pollen into the nostrils of an allergy sufferer.

The foolishness unfolded in round 10, when Judah hit Mayweather low and then added a rabbit punch for emphasis. Consumed by anger and the desire to protect his fighter, Mayweather's trainer and uncle, Roger, entered the ring. That, of course, prompted Judah's trainer and father, Yoel, to follow. Within seconds, there was total chaos.

Though he certainly didn't spark the melee and didn't ask to get hit with cheap shots by an opponent who knew he had no chance to win, Mayweather nonetheless should have

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Ryan thinks "Pretty Boy" should have paid for Uncle Roger's sins

PHOTO BY RAY BAILEY

Referee Perez rushes in to DQ Jones after he twice fouled Griffin

been disqualified because his cornerman entered the ring during battle. The rules on that matter are clear. Not surprisingly, though, the action was allowed to resume after the ring was cleared of trespassers and Mayweather went on to capture a unanimous decision, an outcome that was as predictable as another hike in gas prices.

Afterward, referee Richard Steele explained that he didn't disqualify Mayweather because he had called timeout, as a result of Judah's fouling, before Uncle Roger decided to crash the party. While that may have technically been true, it shouldn't have mattered. A cornerman isn't supposed to breach the boundaries of the battlefield, timeout or no timeout. That rule exists because one never knows what the interloper will do in such a situation, be it attack his fighter's rival, go after the referee, incite a riot, etc. Had Uncle Roger whacked Judah with a stool (though, admittedly, it's the Judah camp that's more skilled at propelling ring furniture), would Steele still be relying on the timeout excuse to explain why he didn't issue a DQ?

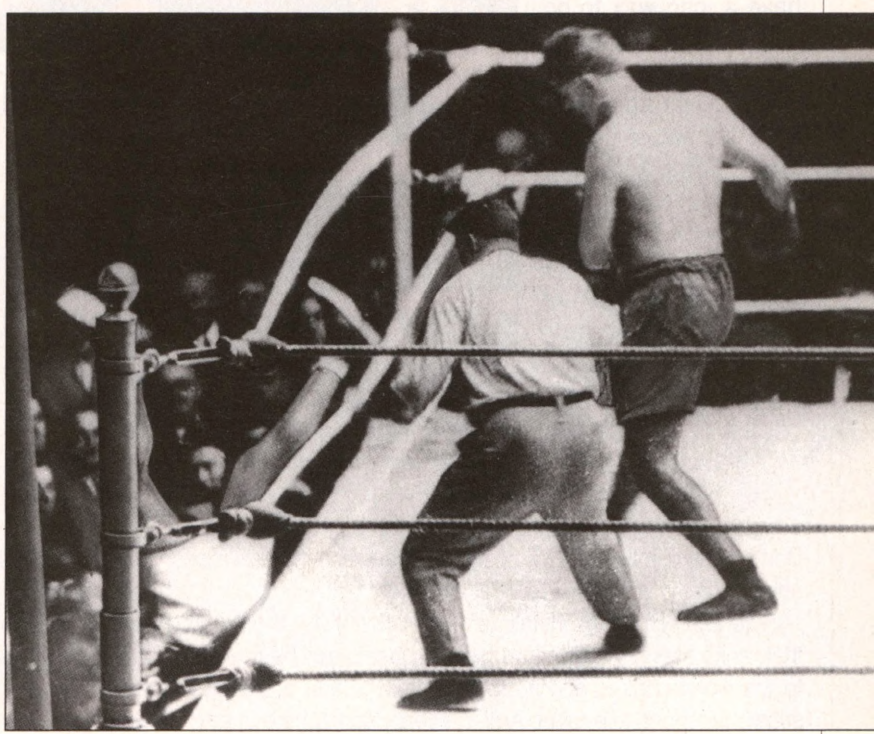
Uncle Roger's actions were deemed serious enough that the Nevada State Athletic Commission punished him with a one-year suspension and $200,000 fine. So why was Steele so lenient? Because the referee wasn't anxious to put an ugly "L" on the "Pretty Boy's" gorgeous unbeaten record, that's why. In bouts the likes of Mayeather-Judah, the playing field is usually tilted toward the unbeaten superstar who's favored to win. The aforementioned "hero" gets the benefit of the doubt from the judges and has some of his infractions overlooked by the referee because the establishment loves unblemished resumes. Mayweather vs. unbeaten dynamo Ricky Hatton or legend Oscar De La Hoya is more appealing and marketable (in theory, at least) if the Pretty Boy is the undefeated pound-for-pound king.

Forgotten among all this favoritism, however, is the fact that there was an example not too long ago of officials keeping an eye on the rulebook and not the opinion polls and rightfully sending a superstar packing. In 1997, Roy Jones hit Montell Griffin when the challenger was on the canvas, and Jones was disqualified by ref Tony Perez on the advice of New Jersey State Athletic Commission head Larry Hazard.

It was Jones' first loss in 35 outings. Did that ruin one of boxing's biggest names or damage the sport in any measurable way? Hell no. Jones, who, like Mayweather, was growing bored with the lack of serious challenges before him, suddenly had new motivation. In a rematch five months later, Griffin was dismantled in the first round and Jones' stature grew.

Those in charge of keeping the playing field tilted ought to remember that the next time some hero's relative wants to be the fourth man in the ring.

20/20 VISION: In the interest of full disclosure, let me say that ESPN Classic can do just about nothing wrong in my mind. Oh, sure, there's the occasional dopey talk show or boring college football game on its broadcast schedule, but then a few hours later, Mickey Mantle is turning on a fastball, Evel Knievel is soaring over 14 buses, or Joe Namath is finding



Firpo knocks Dempsey out of the ring in ESPN Classic's greatest fight of all-time

Personal Perceptions:

The last word on everything from Wladimir Klitschko's wrecking-ball right hand to some postfight conduct that was strictly for the Byrds:

•Klitschko treated Byrd so cruelly that the Audubon Society will probably identify the Ukrainian as Public Enemy Number One. Understand, though, my hesitation in thinking Klitschko has a chance to ever be the best heavyweight in the world. Styles make fights, and the shorter, light-hitting Byrd was perfectly designed for a thrashing. Klitschko's chin let him down in three defeats and even in a win over Samuel Peter, and there's no reason to believe he won't unravel when clobbered by a banger (Hasim Rahman?) again.

•June 21, 2003, is starting to look like the heavyweight version of "The Day The Music Died." That's when we witnessed the last bout of Lennox Lewis, a gifted champion who was never considered a must-see performer, but is nonetheless missed more with each passing day. Look around. The current crop of heavies may now be worse than the Slobs and Blobs Era that followed Larry Holmes' prime and preceded Mike Tyson's.

•Wouldn't it be neat if Freddie Roach, Buddy McGirt, and Mark Breland, none of whom will get into the International Boxing Hall of Fame on the basis of their ring accomplishments, one day got inducted for their work as trainers? They have a long way to go, but all three have shown that their true boxing calling might have more to do with wrapping hands than getting their own paws wrapped.

•Remember the grand old days of the smoke-filled arena? (Granted, emphysema can be a bitch, but all that hanging fog made for some great black-and-white photos.) That era is long gone, and with more states adopting anti-puffing laws, the smoke-filled bar with boxing on its TV is also becoming a thing of the past.

•As a wise, not-so-old man once said, newspapers wouldn't get away with screwing up simple baseball or football facts because they'd get a flood of calls from outraged readers. When they botch a boxing item, however, either nobody realizes it or nobody cares. How else to explain the New York *Daily News* referring to Lennox Lewis as "Lewis Johnson" in a recent article about ticket pricing?

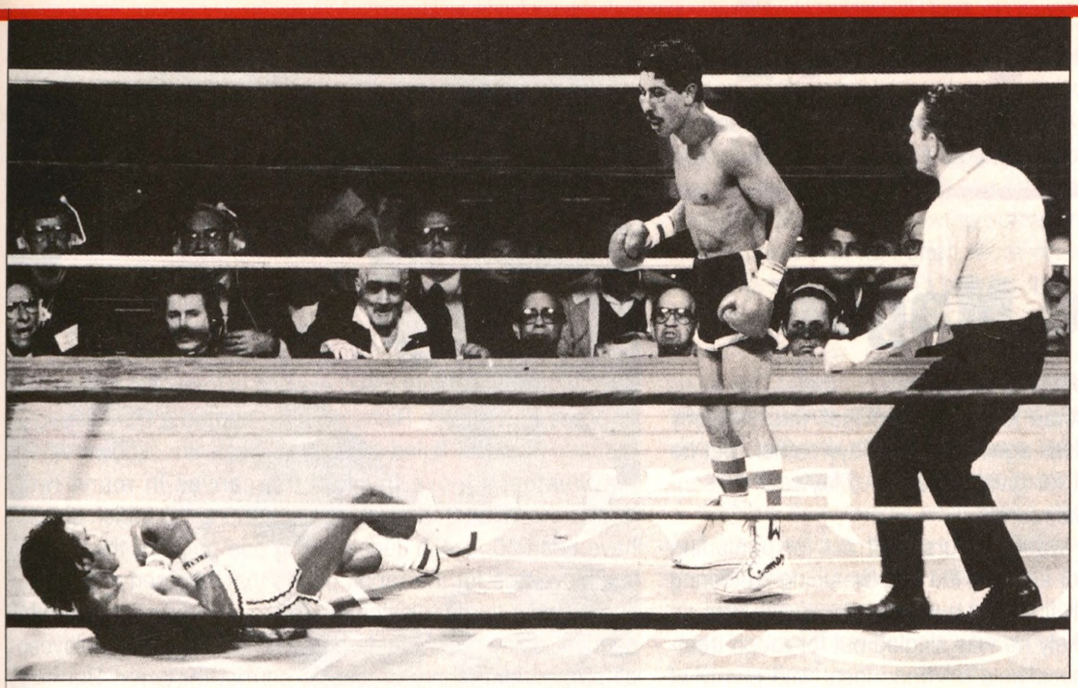
•Before being issued a boxing license, every fighter should be forced to watch a tape of Byrd's interview with HBO immediately after his defeat. The words "class" and "grace" are overused in sports, but Byrd and his family displayed both on what had to be one of the most disheartening nights of their lives. Byrd may not be a great heavyweight, but he's a great sportsman. And that's a distinction that's more impressive than IBF titles.

PHOTO BY ALEXANDER HEIMANN/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Klitschko didn't need a strong chin against Byrd's pecks

Don Maynard in the end zone, and the planets in my television universe are once again in proper alignment.

The ESPN Classic installment of *Who's # 1?*, the series that ranks everything from the biggest upsets and best teams to the worst chokes and most overrated, is one of the best shows on sports television. And it recently tackled the unenviable challenge of trying to determine the 20 greatest fights in history. (In case you didn't see it, here were the top five: 1) Jack Dempsey-Luis Firpo, 2) Muhammad Ali-Joe Frazier III, 3) Archie Moore-Yvon Durelle, 4) Marvin Hagler-Thomas Hearns, and 5) Joe Louis-Billy Conn I.) These types of shows are always fun because the selections are sure to stir debate. And while the list was basically solid, allow me to chew the meat off of a few bones of contention.



Should Gomez' war with Pintor have made the list?

Though *my* list would have led with Hagler-Hearns, ESPN Classic's top five doesn't deserve any real second-guessing. What *did* leave me shaking my head, however, was the inclusion of Sugar Ray Robinson-Jake LaMotta VI (it placed 19th), Ali-Foreman (18th), and Louis-Max Schmeling II (17th). All were memorable events, but *great* fights? Heck, LaMotta's beating was dubbed "The St. Valentine's Day Massacre," and massacres don't qualify as great bouts. Those three slots in the lineup should have gone to Julio Cesar Chavez-Meldrick Taylor I, Wilfredo Gomez-Lupe Pintor, and Juan Meza-Jamie Garza.

There were a few other things about the program guaranteed to frustrate the serious boxing enthusiast. Some bouts—namely Ali-Frazier I, Ali-Foreman, Larry Holmes-Ken Norton, Foreman-Ron Lyle, and Tony Zale-Rocky Graziano I—were relived only in still photos. (Problems obtaining the film rights?) Though highlights of Aaron Pryor-Alexis Arguello I were shown, the barrage of punches that led to the stoppage wasn't. And a photo identified as being from Ali-Frazier I had to have been from the second or third meeting because Ali wasn't wearing red trunks. (We editors notice these kinds of things.)

Overall, though, *Who's # 1?* was a very entertaining hour of TV. It was a reminder of how one night together in a ring can link two men for eternity, evidence of how little the game actually has changed through the decades, and a rare opportunity to see film of Carmen Basilio-Tony DeMarco, Moore-Durelle, and other grainy gems. So what's next from the gang at ESPN Classic? The 20 greatest knockouts? Perhaps the 20 most dominant titlists? How about the 20 most dramatic comebacks? Get busy, fellas. We're waiting. Impatiently.

GEORGE FLOOR MAN: In *Tangled Ropes*, the autobiography of pro wrestling great Superstar Billy Graham, the former champion spends a few pages ripping phony televangelists, particularly those who claim to heal the sick or appear to send members of their flock collapsing involuntarily to the floor from their simple touch.

Graham tells of the time one of his friends was standing in a prayer line at one of those religious retreats with none other than Big George Foreman. When the evangelist laid a hand on them, the two men dropped to the ground, the feeling in their legs seemingly zapped by the magnitude of the moment and the power of the holy man. A few seconds later, though, Foreman turned his head to Graham's buddy, winked, and asked him, "How long do we stay down?" ■

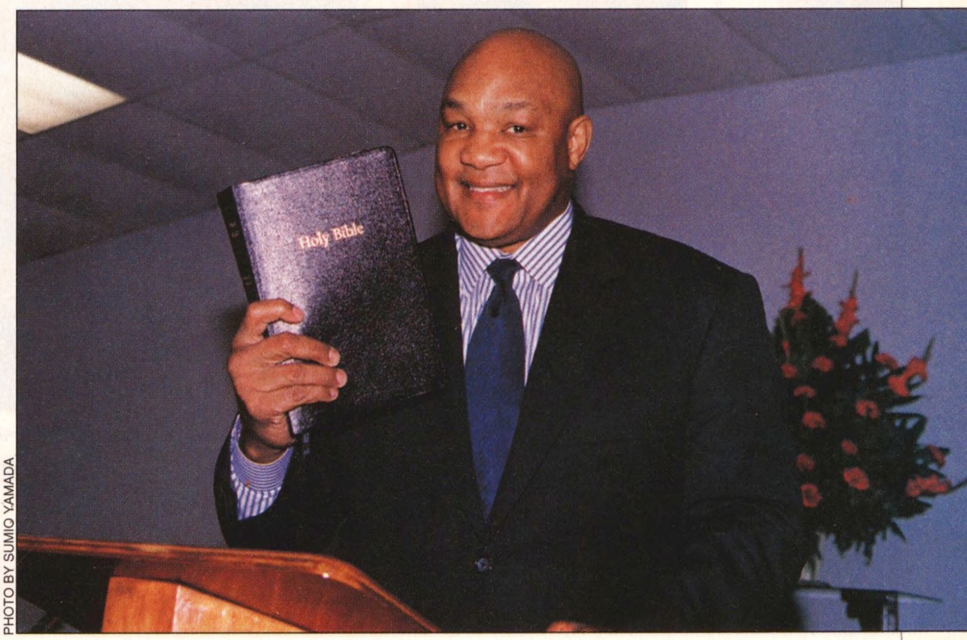


PHOTO BY SUMIO YAMADA

Did Foreman take a dive for faith healer?

By Ivan Goldman

Steele Magoo

It seems like every time Zab Judah competes, his character flaws become an issue, and that was certainly the case in his loss against Floyd Mayweather. But he also deserves credit for giving Grade A Mayweather serious trouble for several rounds.

The commission was of course correct for punishing Roger Mayweather for entering the ring breathing fire during round 10. But a 200K fine plus a year's suspension was on the harsh side. It's likely he was singled out for rough treatment precisely because he's a Vegas local with plenty of friends around town. We've all seen the bend-over-backward syndrome, as in, "He's a pal, so I'm going to bend over backward to show no favoritism."

Roger's transgression occurred precisely as Marc Ratner, long-time executive director of the Nevada commission, was leaving to pursue his fortune in the tough-man business. By screwing Roger, the commissioners seemed to be proclaiming that with or without Ratner, they still have sharp teeth.

The security people deserve a pat on the back for stopping the melee without using excessive force. No billy clubs, no Mace. But referee Richard Steele earned a triple-strength Magoo. First, he failed to call the flash knockdown when Mayweather's glove touched the canvas in round two. Worse, he failed to deduct points in round 10, which should have been 10-7, with Judah losing one point for the vicious low blow, one for the rabbit punch that was certainly intentional, and a third for losing the round. The ring riot and subsequent delay gave Steele and the commission employees all around him plenty of time to correct the error. But they never did, making it even more glaring.

Steele's series of mistakes swung scores two points in Judah's direction, and we're fortunate it didn't force a false decision. Had he done his job properly, the International Brotherhood of Fakers would have had even less of an excuse to order a mandatory rematch, which is precisely what those compulsive crackpots did. Nothing could possibly be more devalued than their IBF welterweight title, which Judah owned only because Carlos Baldomir refused to pay an astro-

PHOTO BY CHRIS POLK/HBO

Why didn't Steele penalize Judah?

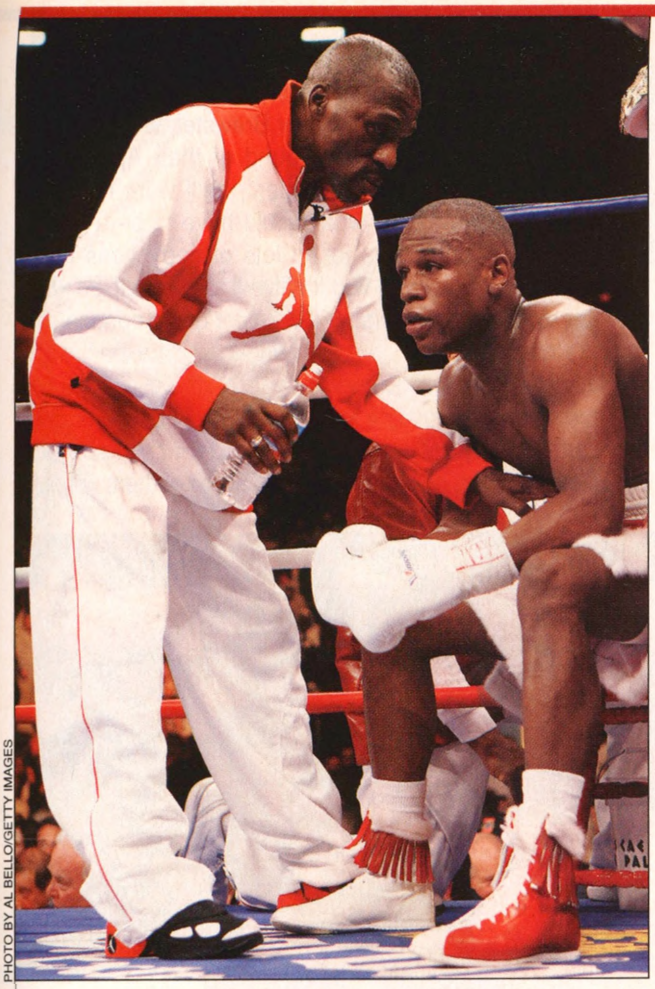


PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Was the Nevada commission too tough on Uncle Roger?

nomical sanctioning fee. Just because the IBF officials fished their belt out of the dumpster and ran a dirty rag over it doesn't make it clean. It should be hauled away with the orange rinds, cigarette butts, and dead sports book tickets.

I'm going to assume that Mayweather ignores the ruling and gives up the tainted belt. But it's not easy to predict what Floyd will do next after he walked away from $8-million to fight Antonio Margarito and paid a reported $750,000 to buy out his promoter Bob Arum. No doubt it didn't sit well with Floyd that Arum would have been promoting both fighters and possibly leaning toward Margarito. Of course, Mayweather's moves also put him closer to his dream of a gazillion-dollar supermatch with Oscar De La Hoya, who's got Arum on his list of people to screw whenever possible.

As they promoted Judah-Mayweather, Arum and Don King put on a prefight press conference in Atlantic City that starred—get this—Arum and King. Apparently, Mayweather and Judah (certainly Judah was uncooperative with the media) were unwilling to do much prefight publicity, so the suits stepped into the breach themselves. King, who didn't need much coaxing, should put a bumper sticker on his limo, reading: "I brake for microphones and TV cameras."

When it comes to having something to say, both King and Arum are in fact often more colorful than the fighters themselves. If you don't believe it, try interviewing Winky Wright sometime.

It's Alive! It's Alive!: Just as we were about to say a few words and lower it into the ground, the heavyweight division, with only moments to spare, twitched one of its toes.

Now it's limping around under its own power. What's next? A definitive heavyweight champ who steals the public's heart? Not anytime soon, but, in the meantime, as Dr. Frankenstein yelled to Igor, "It's alive! It's alive!"

First there was Sergei Liakhovich's impressive victory over Lamon Brewster on Showtime—one heck of a fight with plenty of back and forth action between two determined, formidable big men.

Liakhovich, 29, is the kind of heavyweight you knew just had to be out there somewhere—a hungry hopeful who never faced a world-class opponent, but day after day kept doing his work in the gym, praying the stars would come together so some night he could make his big play. He's no Joe Louis and hits only a little harder than Chris Byrd, but "The White Wolf" is quick, he's tough, and he puts on a fine show. In serious trouble in round seven, he took a knee but rose to finish strong, indicating ring savvy and iron will.

Only two weeks after Liakhovich's impressive showing against Brewster, Dominic Guinn, who'd been decisioned by Liakhovich in December 2004, stepped in front of the ESPN2 cameras to test big Englishman Audley Harrison. Harrison, 19-2 (14), has been posing as the second coming of Muhammad

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Liakhovich poses with Don King following upset of Brewster

Ali ever since he won Olympic Gold in 2000. But at age 34, he finally had to put up or shut up, and when he felt Guinn's punches, he elected to forget whatever fight plan he had and just try to survive a long 12 rounds. In the meantime, Guinn got the chance to prove he's one of those seriously dangerous steppingstones—the kind that can pop right out of the ground and knock you to your knees if you don't pay attention. You can't have a decent heavyweight division without guys like Guinn, and I see good paychecks for him down the road.

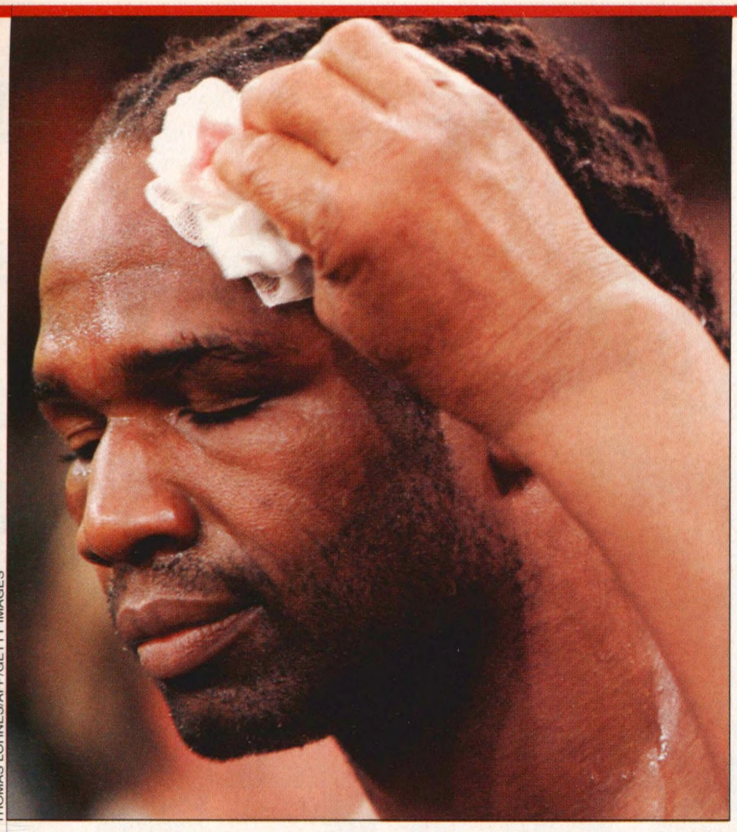
Then came the improbable saga of Wladimir Klitschko. After all he's been through, it's hard to believe Klitschko is only 30. He's like a heavyweight Fernando Vargas. But with retired brother Vitali and cunning Emanuel Steward guiding him in the corner, he bounced out of his hole to pulverize Byrd with quick, brutal punches. If you're only as good as your last victory, then Wladimir is still pretty darn good.

What he must do now is go after Brewster, who stopped him so definitively in the fifth round of their April 2004 meeting. If Klitschko is the real deal, he'll want revenge against tough Brewster in what would have to be a lucrative contest. Wladimir has taken lots of bodyslams from fans and fight writers who find it difficult to sympathize with a fighter who's so much bigger than most of his opponents. But he's not one to run from hard fights, and I expect we'll see him in the ring with Brewster again.

These encouraging signs in the heavyweight division came after James Toney and Hasim Rahman laid their egg on HBO in a match that was supposed to tell us which of them will pull

PHOTO BY ALEXANDER HEIMANN/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Brave Byrd tries to hide behind his gloves as Klitschko unloads



THOMAS LOHNES/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Byrd showed plenty of guts while absorbing a bad beating

punished him severely in their first match more than five years earlier. Byrd, as always, refused to run, but with the determination of a Terminator, kept trying to make it work until in the seventh round, when referee Wayne Kelly made a correct stoppage.

At age 35, sweet-tempered Byrd can no longer call on the polished upper body movement that used to protect him. Consequently, he's taking hellacious beatings from fighters who give his threadbare power no respect.

This is a propitious moment to make a clarification. A few years ago, when I complained about Byrd's dull, pawing style, the words "he should not be a fighter" appeared in my column, but I never wrote them. I was the victim of one of those very occasional computerized glitches we get around here. I'd never be silly enough to believe that an Olympic silver medalist shouldn't be a fighter, which is like saying a horse shouldn't be a horse. A horse is already a horse, and Byrd has *always* been a fighter.

Futch: To ESPN2. After showing the Guinn-Harrison match out of Rancho Mirage, California, the network followed up only five days later with a Fight of the Year candidate when Kermit Cintron stopped David Estrada in a close welterweight contest that was even *better* than Mayweather-Judah. This proved once again that pay-per-screwings are not necessarily better shows than their hassle-free, no-pay competition. ■

ahead of the pack. Instead, they triggered a RING cover story titled "Who Needs Heavyweights?" Neither looked even close to being a rightful heir to the storied crown worn by Dempsey, Louis, Marciano, and Ali. Tubby Toney, 37, lacks discipline, and Rahman, 33, doesn't have the spark that's always there in a true champion.

But it turns out we didn't have all our heavyweight eggs in one basket after all, and once again we can actually look forward to some intriguing matches in the division. The last time we had a situation like that, gas was two bucks a gallon.

It's worth noting that Byrd showed tremendous guts climbing into the ring with the much, much bigger Wladimir, who'd already

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

Toney, gut protruding over his trunks, comes off the ropes with a left

[Camera Clicks]

PHOTO BY JULIAN FINNEY/GETTY IMAGES

This is what's known as the "I'm doing fine without you, Ricky Hatton" pose. Promoter Frank Warren shows off the stars of his perfectly healthy post-Hatton stable, including mega-prospect Amir Khan, heavyweight contender Danny Williams, cruiserweight contender Enzo Macarinelli, heavyweight Matt Skelton, and world super middleweight champion Joe Calzaghe. Warren certainly gets the best-dressed award among this crew, while Williams is bringing up the rear with his T-shirt-and-slacks look.

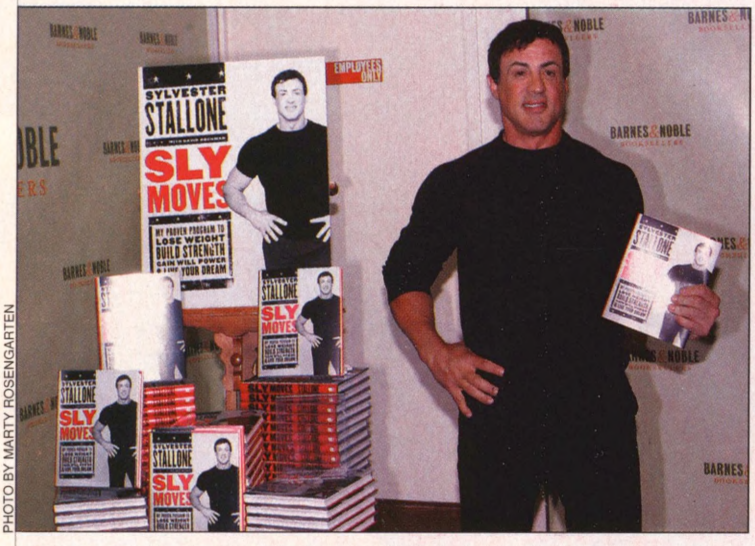


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Sylvester Stallone's new book is called Sly Moves, *and no, it isn't a chronicle of how he sweet-talked the movie studios into green-lighting a project in which a 60-year-old man fights for the heavyweight title. It's actually a fitness book, and we have to admit, Stallone is in pretty darned good shape for a man his age.*

PHOTO BY TIMOTHY A. CLARY/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Apparently, the connection between boxing and Victoria's Secret doesn't end with DeMarcus Corley. The lingerie company recently launched a new line of sports bras and active wear called "Sexy Sport," and models Selita Ebanks and Izabel Goulart wore boxing gloves as they showed off the collection. It remains to be seen if Victoria's Secret will soon unveil its own line of sexy gumshields and alluring Enswells.

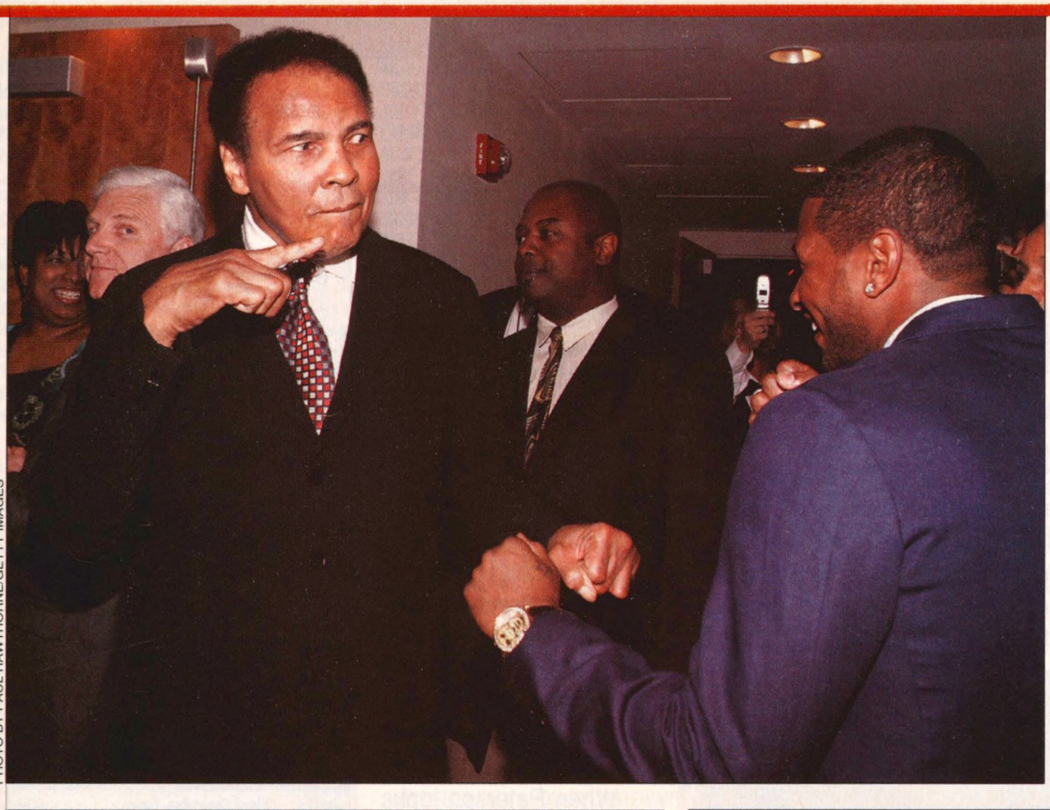


PHOTO BY PAUL HAWTHORNE/GETTY IMAGES

Some 40 years after he famously posed with John, Paul, George, and Ringo, Muhammad Ali is still a preferred photo partner of pop music stars, as evidenced by R&B hit-maker Usher engaging in a showdown with The Greatest. One word of warning to Usher: Don't expect to win a close decision over Ali. Not only was this photo taken in Ali's hometown of Louisville, but it was taken at the Muhammad Ali Center. That's what we call a serious home-turf advantage.

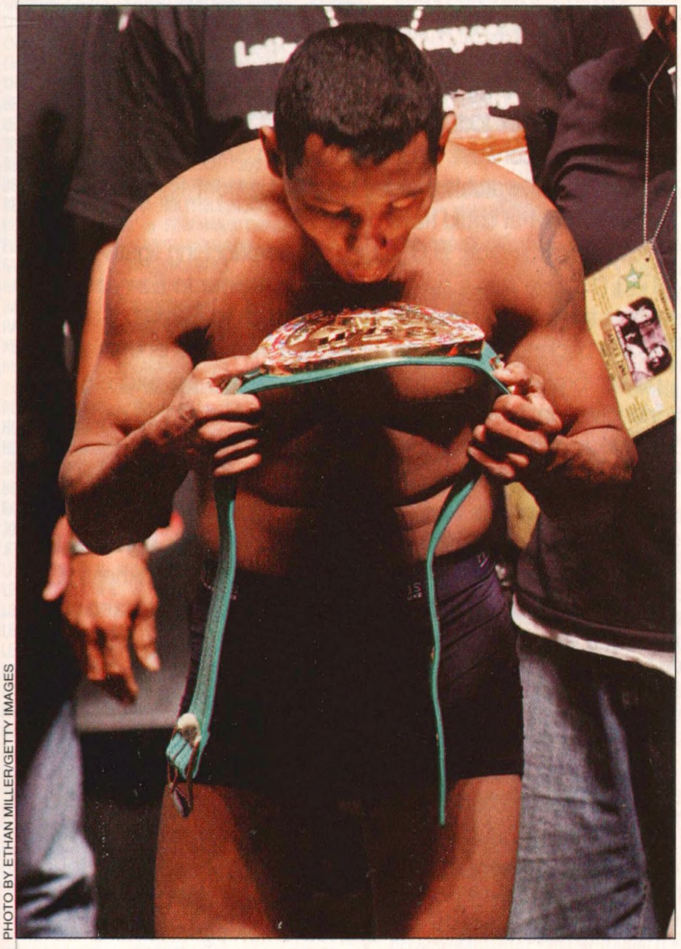


PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

We hope you realize you're kissing it goodbye, Ricardo. After making weight for his fight with Oscar De La Hoya, Ricardo Mayorga gave his alphabet trinket a kiss—something he would be doing plenty of to De La Hoya's fists the following night.

Nostalgia Corner

They laughed when Joe Bugner sat down to play the piano during the buildup to the European champ's 1973 match with Muhammad Ali. But the laughter turned to snores when the fight started and Ali boxed his way to a monotonous decision. Cynics claimed that the robe Ali wore into the ring, which was given to him by Elvis Presley, was the flashiest thing on display that night.

By Joe Santoliquito

Anthony Peterson Lightweight

Anthony Peterson first reached for the courage, whether it was from a bottle or a marijuana cigarette. A few gulps of booze or a few tokes of a joint would always suffice, get him into the intoxicated mindset he needed for what he was about to do. Then he'd reach for the gun, make certain the bullet chamber was empty, and be ready to search for prey.

His conscience numbed, Peterson tried to be smooth and indiscreet, as he moved stealthily in the shadows, before pouncing, empty gun in hand, on an unsuspecting victim with a whisper: *I don't want to hurt you, just give me the money.*

That was the street code Peterson felt obligated to abide by.

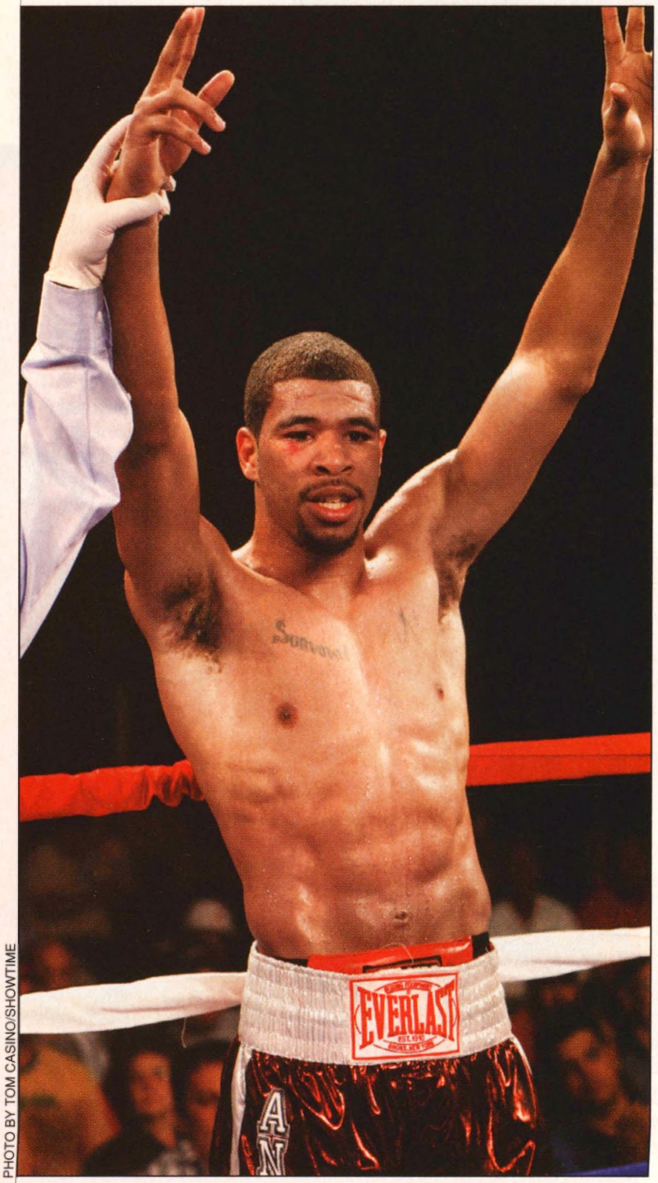


PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Robbing people at gunpoint was a risky endeavor, yet too lucrative to ignore. If a victim wasn't cooperative, Peterson would cock the hammer back, ready to shoot, for effect. The money came quickly.

Fortunately, Peterson, 21, never fired the gun. But something yanked him away in time from a life of crime and, potentially, murder. That something was boxing.

When Peterson looks back on his life as a 17-year-old high school dropout and his life as a professional fighter today, he sees a stark contrast. He's appearing on *ShoBox* instead of sitting in a cell watching older brother Lamont fighting on TV, wondering what could have been.

Pro Record

2004		
Sept. 25	Nicholas Dean, Memphis, TN	KO 1
Oct. 23	Chris Burford, Lula, MS	KO 2
Nov. 5	Bill Tipton, Tunica, MS	KO 1
Dec. 12	Jose Angel Roman, Washington, DC	W 4
2005		
April 9	Edgar Pedraza, El Paso, TX	W 4
April 23	Michael Moss, Tunica	W 4
April 30	Martin Quiroz, Lula	KO 5
May 22	Mario Lacey, Choctaw, MS	KO 2
June 11	Wayne Fletcher, Washington, DC	KO 6
June 18	Anthony Middlebrooks, Memphis	KO 1
July 26	Carlos Valdez, Memphis	KO 6
Aug. 20	Johnny Walker, Biloxi, MS	W 6
Sept. 2	Jorge Alberto Reyes, Little Rock, AR	KO 2
Oct. 15	Roy Bohannon, Lula	KO 4
2006		
Jan. 28	Manuel Bocanegra, Tunica	KO 2
March 11	Steve Verdin, Tunica	KO 3
April 28	Jermaine White, New Town, ND	KO 3

FIGHTS	WON	LOST	DRAW	KOs
17	17	0	0	13

The Washington, D.C.-based, powerpunching lightweight is 17-0 (13). He has a devoted manager-trainer in Barry Hunter, who's been more father figure than coach to Peterson, as well as the backing of co-manager Shelly Finkel, one of the leading power brokers in the game. Peterson has an exciting fan-friendly style, featuring a vicious left hook. His affable personality makes him an attraction both in and out of the ring.

"Skill-wise, Anthony can deal with anyone," Hunter said. "As far as getting to a world title, we're looking at around 20, 25 fights. Physically, I know Anthony can run with the big boys, but right now, mentally, we're not ready. If he had a weakness, that would be it, along with straightening out his right hand. In a about a year, maybe a year-and-a-half, we'll take our shot. You ask Anthony, he's ready to go to war with anyone now."

But first, Peterson had to wage war with himself. None of his recent good fortune would have been possible if he hadn't made an about-face just after he turned 18. At the time, Peterson had no direction and no ambition, other than getting high.

"That's all I did," said Peterson, who began boxing when he was nine years old. "I didn't even train. I sat in the house all day and just got high off marijuana. I didn't care about nothing. Lamont and me started smoking when we were eight or nine years old. It had been a while since I last smoked pot, before I started again when I was 17. My weight

(Continued on page 118)

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GOLD STANDARD!

Oscar's Brilliant Return A Matchmaker's Dream

By Ivan Goldman

How quickly they forget.

For the 20 months preceding his fight with wildman Ricardo Mayorga, Oscar De La Hoya looked so comfortable as a promoter and budding tycoon that he was barely thought of as a fighter anymore. He always seemed to be tending to his business empire or posing for magazines and billboards.

He also mused from time to time about whether he wished to continue as an athlete. He'd been dramatically shaving his fight schedule for years, competing only once in 2002, twice in 2003, twice in 2004, and not at all in

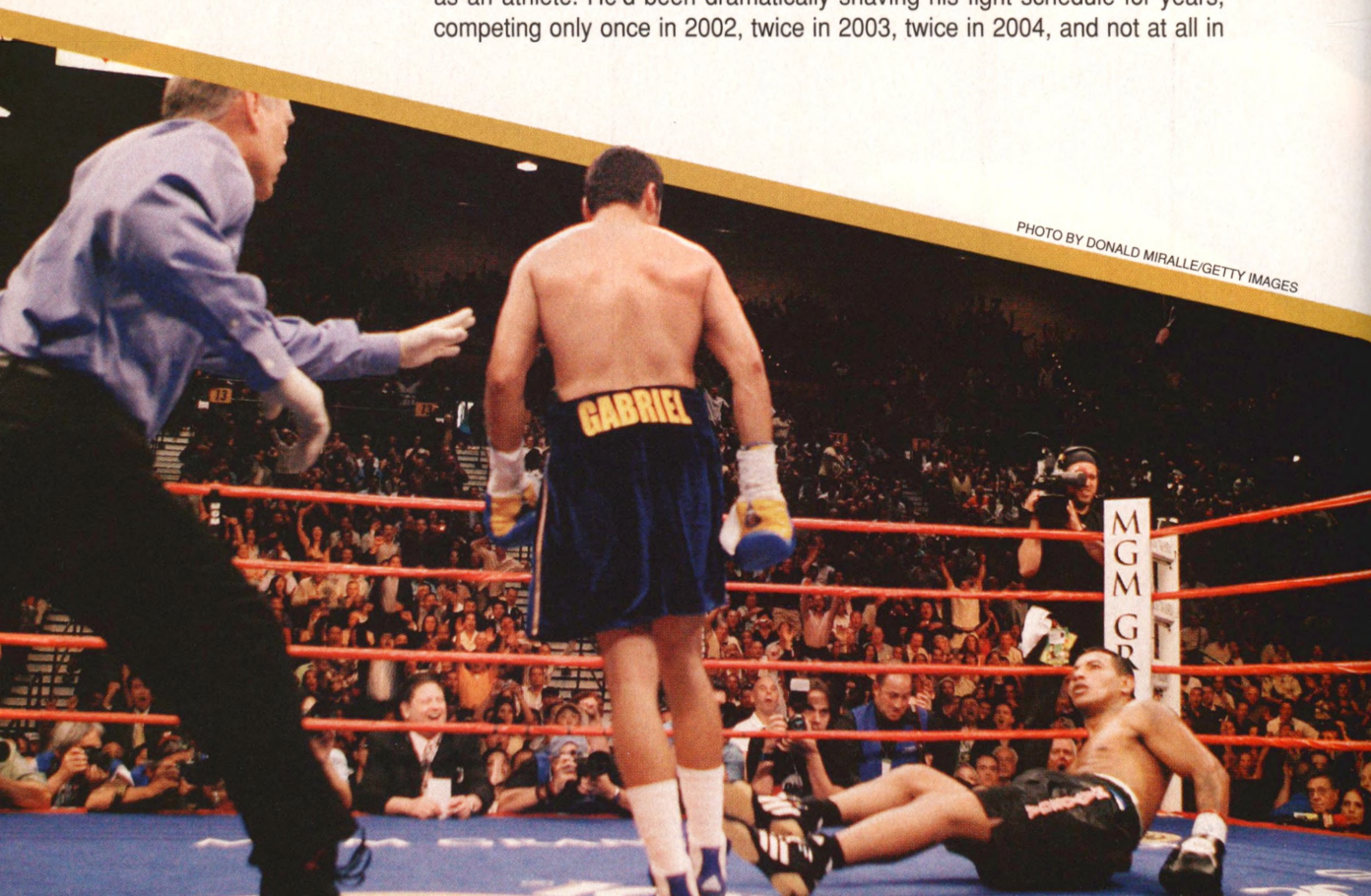
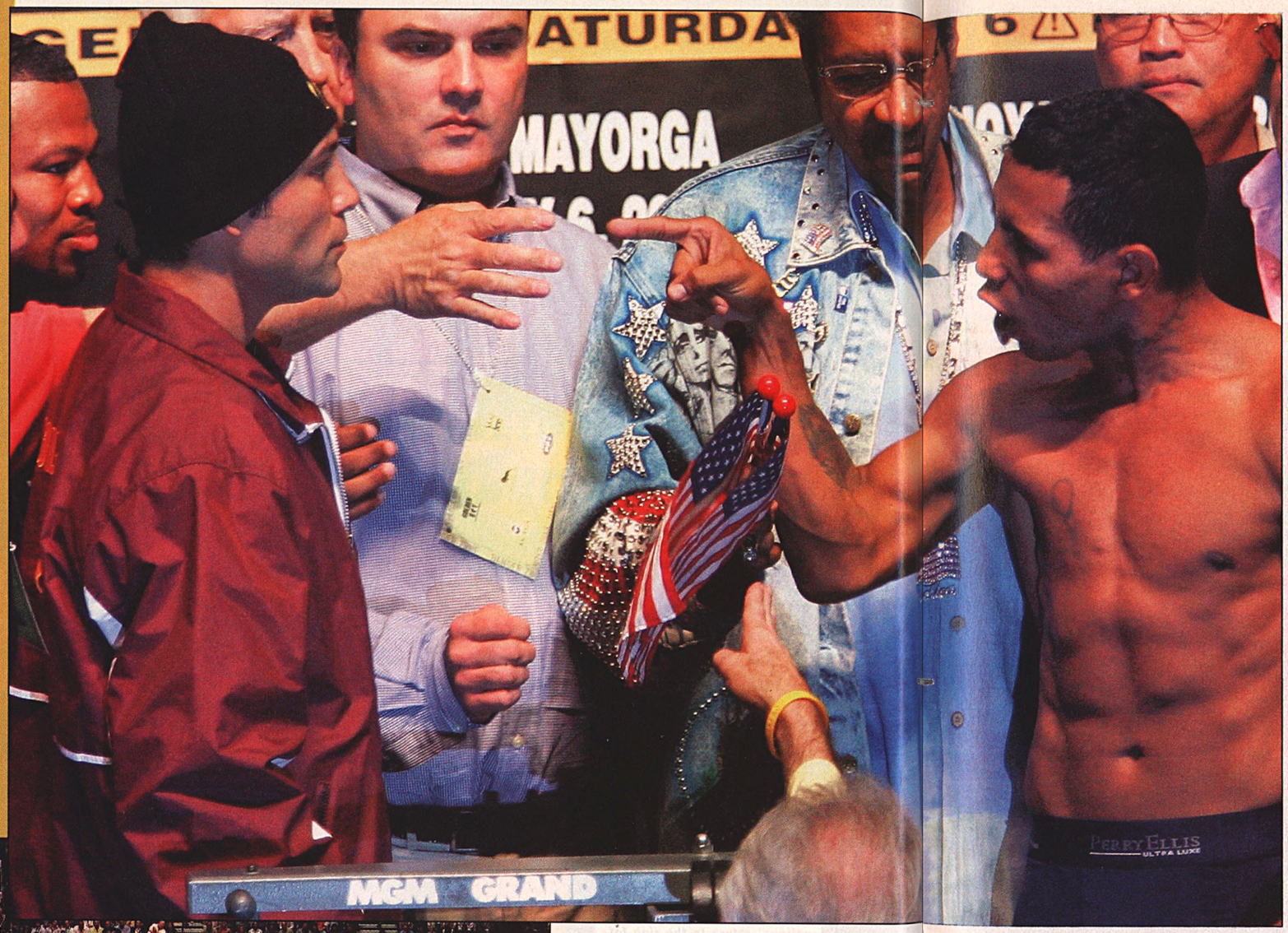


PHOTO BY DONALD MIRALLE/GETTY IMAGES

De La Hoya celebrates his sensational return to the ring following a 20-month hiatus. He came out firing at the opening bell, dumped Mayorga with a searing left hook (left), and kept bombing until he stopped his foe in the sixth round.

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES



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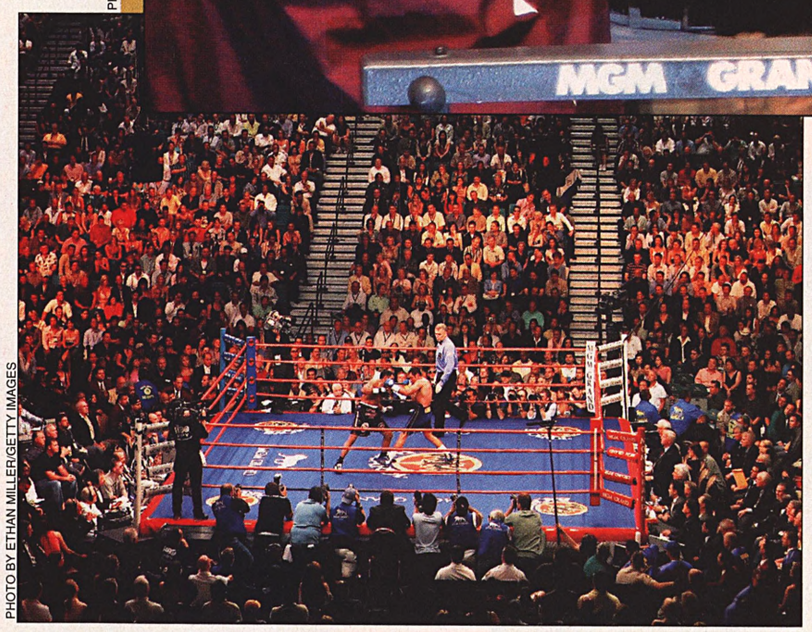

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Part of the crowd of more than 13,000 that showed up at the MGM Grand Arena for De La Hoya's first fight since losing to then-middleweight champion Bernard Hopkins in 2004. The pay-per-view numbers were even more impressive, as approximately 875,000 buys generated more than $43-million.

Mayorga badmouthed De La Hoya throughout the buildup to the fight and was still talking trash at the weigh-in. The nonstop barrage of verbal abuse motivated De La Hoya, who took it personally, especially when Mayorga insulted his wife.

2005. The long layoff forced us to cut him from our rankings for inactivity.

When De La Hoya at last re-entered the ring on May 6 at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas and knocked his taunting, vicious opponent halfway back to Nicaragua, "The Golden Boy" shocked the world into remembering who he really is and what he does best. Hammering quick, deadly shots into Mayorga's head and trunk, Oscar, without saying a word, reminded everyone that, yes, he may be a *People* magazine celebrity, but before he appeared in beer and deodorant ads, rode around in limousines, or dabbled in high-priced real estate, he was a poor kid from East L.A. who fought like the devil. De La Hoya, 38-4 (30), didn't get where he is by fighting boring fights, and his ring rust never made town.

Moments after the opening bell, it was clear De La Hoya wasn't just out to defeat his opponent; he was bent on destroying him. And in order to mete out maximum punishment, he gambled, seldom taking a step back, always staying in punching range, trading from the opening bell until Mayorga, flattened mentally as well as physically, could no longer trade back. Explained De La Hoya afterward, "In

ANATOMY OF A DEMOLITION

Ricardo Mayorga, 153½, came out swinging. Oscar De La Hoya, who weighed the same, stood his ground and countered well. He said later that he felt rusty for about a minute. "Then," he add, "I saw my jab was really hurting him." At the end of the minute, a sizzling left hook knocked Mayorga straight to the canvas. He rose to beat referee Jay Nady's count, but his corner would divulge later that he felt the effects of the punch for three or four rounds. Mayorga survived the round by throwing wild, looping shots.

Throughout the contest, Mayorga tried to end matters with Hail Mary overhand rights. De La Hoya slipped or deflected most of them as he stayed in there mixing up combinations that included an increasingly effective jab. In the third round, De La Hoya landed a terrific left uppercut, making a happy crowd even happier. Mayorga, still dangerous, scored with a big right uppercut and then an overhand right. Two judges scored the round for Mayorga. Round four was also close. THE RING and one judge scored it for Mayorga, who finally got some effective bodywork done. But as the round concluded, De La Hoya was punishing him with combinations.

Round five was even more furious than its action-filled predecessors, as Oscar met fire with more effective fire. The round ended with desperate Mayorga savagely pounding De La Hoya with huge, clearly intentional shots to the back of the head. He drew a warning from Nady, his second.

Oscar came out stalking in the sixth round, looking to land one big shot. Mayorga landed a straight right, providing a split-second opening for De La Hoya, who used it to slam vicious left hooks to the body. He switched upstairs with a light-speed hook to the head, and Mayorga crumpled in the corner.

"I've always said Oscar has the best left hook in the business," his Golden Boy Promotions partner Sugar Shane Mosley said afterward. Mayorga beat the count, but when Nady signaled them to resume fighting, De La Hoya waded in with a volley of quick, accurate, deadly shots. That's it, Nady signaled, jumping in to save the dazed, defenseless, overmatched Mayorga at the 1:25 mark.

Promoter: Golden Boy Promotions, Don King Productions
Television: HBO Pay-Per-View
(5-6-06)

—I.G.

PHOTO BY DONALD MIRALLE/GETTY IMAGES

Mayorga goes down in the sixth round

PHOTO BY DONALD MIRALLE/GETTY IMAGES

De La Hoya's left hook proved deadly against Mayorga. It accounted for both of "The Golden Boy's" knockdowns and gave ample evidence that he has grown into a solid 154-pounder with plenty of pop.

my mind, I said to myself, *If I can take his heart away early, he'll have nothing.*"

Not since Fernando Vargas hurled his steady stream of below-the-belt insults had a De La Hoya bout been so personal. Mayorga, 32, had even cavalierly insulted the virtue of his opponent's wife. Ironically, the last moments of De La Hoya-Mayorga duplicated the last moments of De La Hoya-Vargas, with an opponent helpless on the ropes as Oscar threw a perfectly vicious barrage that left the referee no other option but to step in and stop the slaughter. Forget all about scorecards, this one was *finito.*

Even Oscar's most hardened detractors could find no fault in his performance. They were left with two choices—jump on a quick-moving De La Hoya bandwagon or shut up and get out of the way, because clearly boxing's biggest star is back—just in time too.

Not only does the man on the street have no idea who the heavyweight champ is, he can barely name any heavyweights at all. And as the heavyweight division has tumbled deeper into obscurity, it's threatened to drag all the others down with it. Lightweight terror Jose Luis Castillo, whose May 2005 bout against Diego Corrales was everyone's Fight of the Year, couldn't draw 2,000 fans to a contest in El Paso. This begged comparison to the time De La Hoya drew more than 45,000 people in the same city to watch him fight an obscure French-

man. Two thousand fans? De La Hoya could draw a bigger crowd in that town by shopping for groceries.

But the long layoff after he was kayoed by Bernard Hopkins raised questions that went beyond how much he had left as a fighter. Was he still a crossover star bringing in casual fans? Non-fans? Or, as a married man of 33, would he watch all those teenybopper fans turn their fickle affections elsewhere? The answer came the week after the fight, when HBO Sports announced that approximately 875,000 households purchased the pay-per-view, generating $43.8-million in revenue. It was, by far, the best performing PPV since Hopkins-De La Hoya produced approximately one million buys ($56-million) in September 2004.

"He still has the golden touch," said HBO publicist Ray Stallone.

Throughout his career, De La Hoya's celebrity status has been a curse as well as a blessing. His good looks and charisma made it easier for critics to claim he must be a fake as a fighter. Although there's not a boxer in any division who's faced tougher opposition, they contended he owed all his success to careful matchmaking.

Meanwhile, because of De La Hoya's drawing power, no one ducks him. On the contrary, in a typical week, several fighters in several weight classes call him out. Whenever a fight doesn't get made, it's clear who didn't want it. When he designated Mayorga as his next opponent, De La Hoya's critics immediately called Mayorga an easy mark who throws nothing but roundhouse trash. But despite his barely existent defense, Mayorga, 28-6-1 (23), actually mixes straight, deadly shots in with his haymakers and hurls thunder from all angles. It's one thing to call him an easy opponent and quite another to have him breathing fire all over you.

And many of the same critics calling Mayorga a made-to-order opponent were talking out of both sides of their mouths, hinting and hoping that the madman from Managua would go through De La Hoya the same way he went through Vernon Forrest. After all, Mayorga humbled Forrest twice, Forrest controlled Sugar Shane Mosley twice, and Mosley edged De La Hoya twice. So why shouldn't the man who beat the man who beat the man who beat the man wind up beating the man? Besides, the last time anyone saw Oscar in a fight, he was pounding his gloves on the canvas, unable to rise from a ninth-round liver shot from the crafty Hopkins.

Conventional wisdom dictated that De La Hoya would refuse to mix it up, outboxing his limited but dangerous opponent just enough to win a ho-hum contest that his publicists would later hail as glorious. In other words, they expected him to do it in the style of an aging Hopkins. Mixing it up was what Mayorga wanted. It's why he taunted De La Hoya so mercilessly during the prefight buildup. In fact, had Mayorga been able to plot Oscar's strategy, he'd have come up with precisely the style Oscar presented to him. What tripped up Mayorga was the excellence of its execution.

The contest measured remarkably low on the hype meter. Although it was held the weekend of *Cinco de Mayo*, De La Hoya entered the ring with no mariachi bands, no sombreros, and no super-long entourage. "This was a great night for boxing," his publicist, Bill Caplan, said later, and boxing was what it was all about.

"I think Oscar won some more fans tonight, the way he came out and took control," said Thomas "Hit Man" Hearns, who knows a thing or two about effective aggression.

De La Hoya, a devastating puncher in the lightweight and super lightweight divisions, seemed to lose power as he went up in weight. But against Mayorga, he was strong, his muscles taut and cut, and his movements quick and deadly. "Everything just clicked," said Richard Schaefer, chief executive officer of Golden Boy Promotions. "Clearly, 154 pounds is his weight."

When Oscar moved up to 154 in 2001 to challenge Javier Castillejo for an alphabet title, he was rushing there before his body was ready. When he moved up again to challenge Hopkins in the middleweight division, he pushed harder on the envelope. Hopkins,

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

A victorious De La Hoya acknowledges the cheers of the crowd as fans cluster around the ring, taking photographs of him with cell phones and cameras.

though cautious at first, eventually walked through his punches. But at this stage of his life, De La Hoya appears to have grown into a true junior middleweight who can't be pushed around.

What's next? De La Hoya's pronouncements tend to conflict, sometimes within the same sentence. He said he intended to fight again in September, but he also hinted he might retire.

"So few fighters end their career with a W," said historian Bert Sugar. "This would be a perfect time for him to leave. Here comes the curtain. And now he's going to come back for a second act?" It's hard to argue with Sugar's logic. But it's at least as difficult to urge a fighter who's such a significant asset to the sport to bid it farewell at such a crucial time.

Possible opponents De La Hoya mentioned for September were Winky Wright, Floyd Mayweather, Felix Trinidad, and Antonio Margarito. Ricky Hatton was placed on the list later. But should Trinidad un-retire again, De La Hoya said he won't fight him at 160. He said emphatically that he won't fight Floyd Mayweather without Floyd Sr. in his corner, and the father had already ruled out working a corner against his own son.

Injuries made a September date uncertain. De La Hoya said he'd suffered from a torn rotator cuff on his left shoulder for three years, and that he'd injured it further training for Mayorga. Still later, he announced he'd torn a muscle in his left forearm.

Tickets to De La Hoya-Vargas were as expensive as any in memory, ranging from $150 to $1,250. Even so, Schaefer announced paid attendance at a respectable 13,076. "Most of the unsold seats were in the $350 range," he said.

The usual collection of entertainment celebrities was not in evidence. Apparently, Hollywood was hedging its bets, unsure if it was still cool to appear at a De La Hoya contest. They'll be back for the next one. ■

Ivan Goldman is THE RING 's West Coast correspondent.

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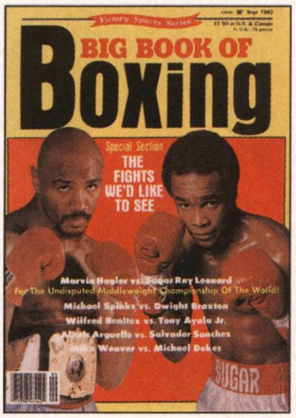

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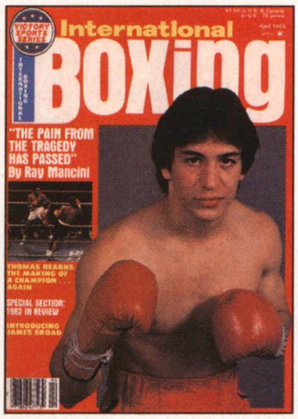

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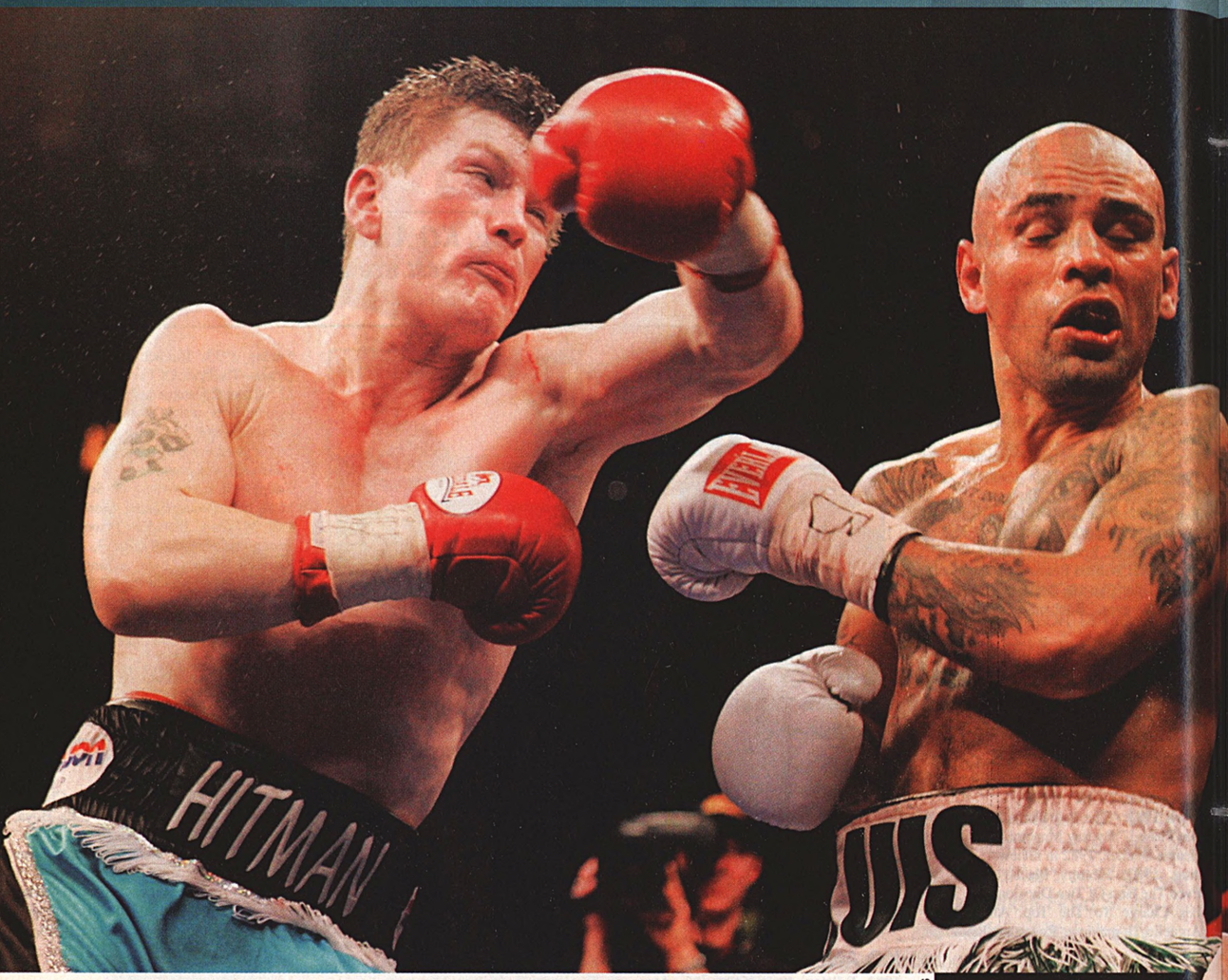

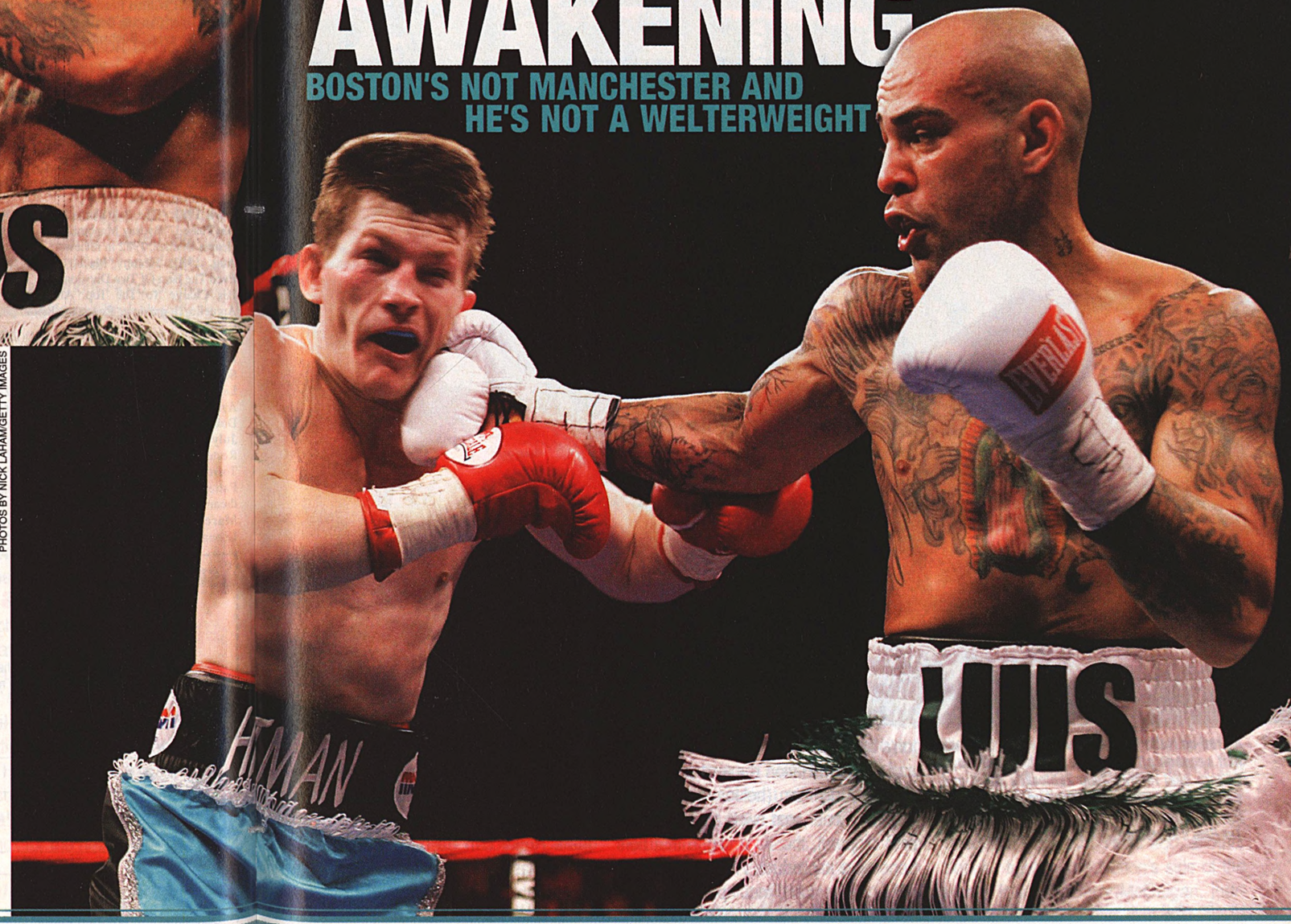

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Hatton's first major fight on American soil turned out to be unexpectedly demanding. The Manchester "Hitman" got off to an excellent start (above), but southpaw Collazo regrouped and rallied back to make the fight extremely close (right).

By Don Stradley

The sound was thin in Boston's acoustically challenged TD Banknorth Garden, but the large number of British boxing fans on hand for Ricky Hatton's bout with Luis Collazo began warming up their vocals during the preliminaries. "Winter Wonderland" became "Hatton Wonderland" and echoed around the cavernous arena. Hatton, THE RING's 2005 Fighter of the Year, was making his first American appearance since becoming a major star in the United Kingdom, and many of his fans had traveled across the Atlantic to support him. A Manchester flag and a few Union Jacks were spotted in the Garden's nosebleed section.

"I don't know if they all made it," said John Brister, publicist for Banner Promotions, the American arm of Hatton's promotional juggernaut. "We expected a lot more." The attendance was reported as 7,915, but some estimates have it closer to a scant 6,280.

"There's quite a few back in Manchester saving up their money for bigger fights down the road," said Ged Mason, chief executive of Morson International, the company that has sponsored Hatton for seven years. Mason liked the Garden; he thought it resembled the M.E.N. Arena, where Hatton usually plays to 22,000. "What's the largest arena in America?" Mason asked. He was surprised to learn that boxing seldom requires huge arenas in America.

During the weeklong publicity junket, Hatton was shuttled around Boston like an important movie star or a young political candidate. Hat-

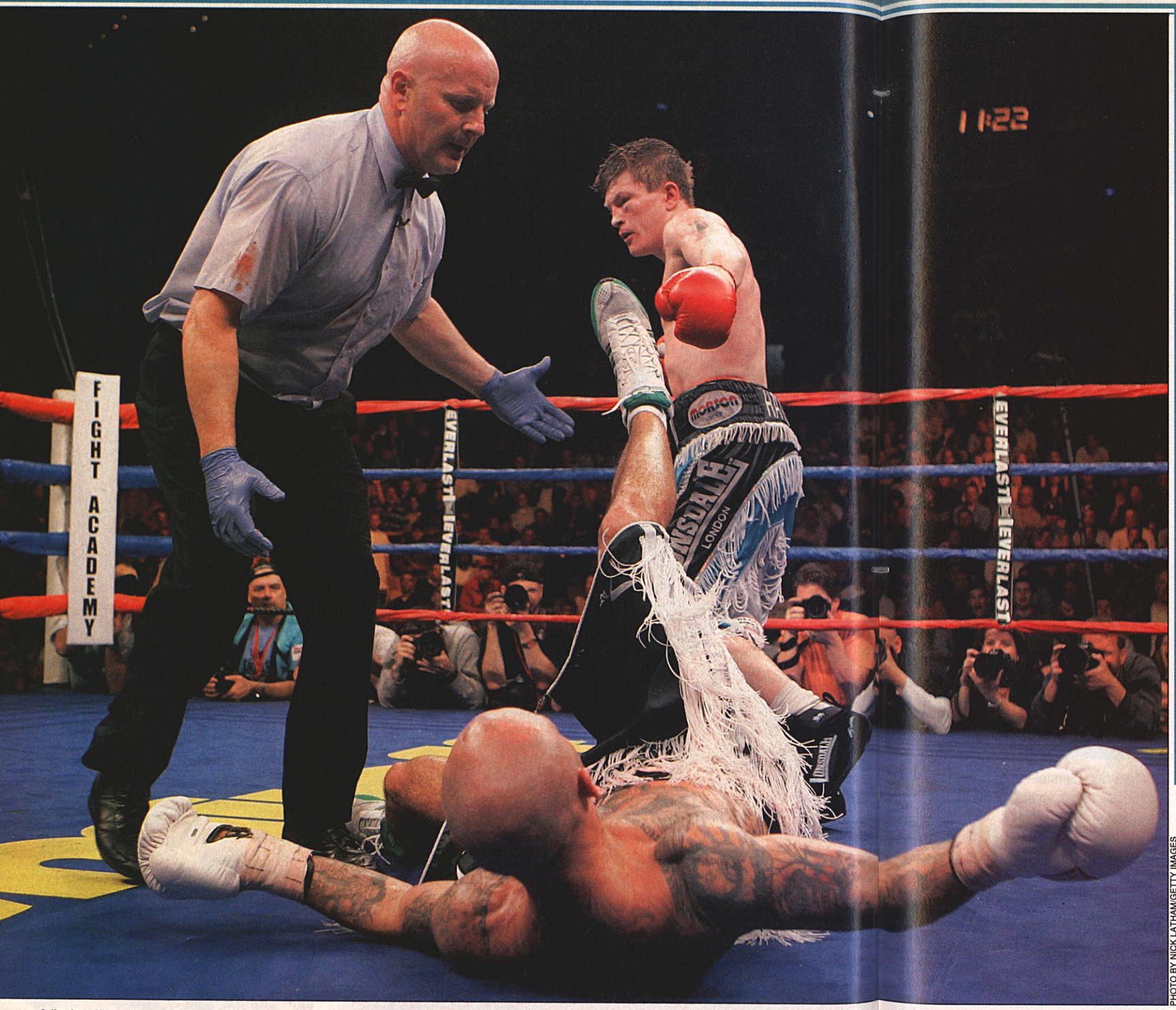

PHOTO BY NICK LATHAM/GETTY IMAGES

A fired-up Hatton floored Collazo with a left hook just seconds after the opening bell. Although Collazo beat referee John Zablocki's count and didn't seem unduly hurt, the two-point spread Hatton earned that round decided the fight on THE RING's scorecard.

COLLAZO WORTHY OF AN ENCORE

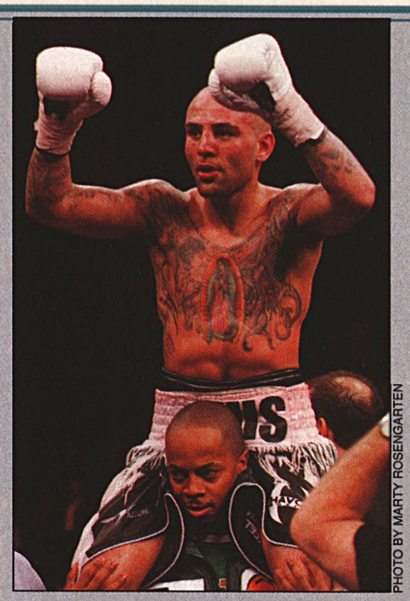

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Unmarked Collazo wants a rematch

He was the forgotten man in the promotion, but Luis Collazo nearly stole the show. He's been a hard luck character lately—his exciting belt-winning bout with Jose Antonio Rivera wasn't televised, and now, finally on a big HBO show, he lost a razor thin decision to Ricky Hatton. Collazo boxed well, but he may have hurt his own cause by constantly looking to the referee whenever Hatton roughed him up. Fighters who seek the ref's help don't impress the judges, because it looks like they're being intimidated. In the late rounds, however, Collazo was the boss.

"I believe he should have done more than he did to come out with the victory, but those things happen in boxing," said Collazo. When asked why he chose to brawl instead of box the way he'd promised, Collazo said, "I had to stand my ground, otherwise the judges would've totally blown me out of the fight."

Now there's the question as to whether his performance against Hatton will earn him some more bouts on the cable network. Fights against any of the other top welters would be enticing for HBO viewers, but what Collazo wants most is a rematch with Hatton. Collazo is game to meet Hatton in Manchester, but said dejectedly, "Hatton wants a big money fight with the Mayweathers and the Cottos. But if he really thinks he beat me, and if he's really a gentleman, he should give me a rematch.

"I'm not a puncher, but he couldn't handle my power. He should go back to 140. I don't make predictions, but if he fights me again, I'll knock him out."

—D.S.

ton's handlers are slick and professional, and although Hatton remains a down-to-earth young man (he loves Elvis and Guinness beer, and owns a pair of fuzzy pink slippers), there's a sense that he's becoming a product. Art Pellulo, Banner's president and mouthpiece, had previously tried to make Brazil's Acelino Freitas into a star in America, but Freitas was too moody and unpredictable to win over an American audience. "Do you think Ricky can be big in America?" asked Mason. It was hard to say. Hatton is likable, but the subtleties of his grappling style may be lost on American fans. A lot depended on how he performed against Collazo.

The American campaign was off to a great start when Hatton bowled Collazo over for a flash knockdown just after the opening bell. Still, the New Yorker fought hard and well during the next 11 rounds. Collazo had won the WBA welterweight title last year, and, despite Hatton's nastiness, he proved himself a capable fighter.

Hatton was all steaming fury in the early going, but THE RING's 140-pound champion was smallish at 147, and the bigger Collazo was hardly fazed by Hatton's bodypunches. Collazo upped his activity after a cut on his forehead was examined during the fifth, stinging Hatton with nice counter shots and thumping his chest at the bell. Brief chants of "U.S.A." and "Louie, Louie" floated from the stands, but the Brits are more experienced at singing in sports arenas and drowned out the Americans. They were having more fun than Ricky.

Rounds seven through 10 were close. Hatton looked tired and was bleeding from a cut under his left eye. Don King, Collazo's promoter, stood up and waved a tiny American flag, grinning like Mephistopheles. King, who had stayed home with his ailing wife, rather than take part in the prefight promotion, had to like what he was seeing.

"How do you think Ricky is doing?" said Mason, the sponsor. He was beginning to worry. He was told that Hatton needed a big finish. Years ago, another popular fighter from Hatton's side of the world, Ireland's Barry McGuigan, jour-

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Hatton locks Collazo's right arm in a vice-like grip. Collazo and his corner complained bitterly about all the holding the Englishman initiated, which became more pronounced in the later rounds when Hatton began to slow down and Collazo tagged him more and more.

neyed to Las Vegas to prove his mettle to an American crowd. He ended up losing a 15-round decision to a young unknown named Stevie Cruz, and nearly passed out from the heat. It looked as if the McGuigan story was repeating itself.

Hatton tried like hell during the closing minutes, but Collazo connected with a couple of runaway left crosses that had the British star shaken. Hatton stumbled to his knees at one point, but it was correctly ruled a slip by referee John Zablocki, who would later be criticized by Collazo's camp for allowing Hatton to hold through much of the fight. At the final gong, both fighters raised their arms in victory, although Hatton's team was fidgety as they waited to hear the judges' verdict.

"This may have been a gamble that didn't f'n pay off," said Niall Hickman, Hatton's official biographer. There'd been concern in Hatton's camp that Collazo was going to be a tough opponent, and that fighting at 147 was too big a risk for Hatton. The only person in the British team who'd wanted this fight was Hatton; now there were murmurs at ringside that Collazo had pulled off an upset. When the scores were read in Hatton's favor—115-112 from judges Paul Driscoll and Don O'Neil, and 114-113 from Leo Gerstel—Hickman sighed, "Lucky boy. Well, every one is entitled to a bad day at the office."

The British fans erupted as Hatton was fitted with Collazo's belt, but as Hugh McIlvaney once wrote about the followers of England's Frank Bruno, "Leaving it up to the British public to be objective is, of course, a pointless exercise." THE RING had it 114-113 for Hatton, six rounds apiece with Hatton earning an extra point for the knockdown.

There was some tension at the post-fight press conference, as Collazo's friends and family appeared and complained about the judging, the referee, and the fact that Hatton was making them wait while he took a shower. Collozo's trainer, Nirmil Lorick, com-

plained that Banner Promotions had treated the Collozo team shabbily. "It hurts to lose, doesn't it," said a member of Hatton's camp, which was probably not the best thing to say at the moment. The friendly atmosphere that had preceded the fight was showing some cracks.

Collazo, 26-2 (12), said of Hatton, "He's aggressive and dirty. He got away with things; he held my head down and stepped on my foot."

King vamped to kill time and did a good job of placating the angry Collazo supporters. "I love the Union Jack," said King. "Tony Blair is waiting for us. John Quincy Adams is turning in his grave. Controversy is good. Let's do it again. Ricky Hatton is a wonderful fighter, but I'd like to see a definitive ending to this situation. Viva Puerto Rico! Long live the Queen!"

When Hatton finally arrived, his face was alarmingly bruised and swollen, taking on a sick green color under the harsh lights. He ignored the childish taunts of Collazo's people, embracing Collazo and complimenting him. "Louie is a very underrated fighter," he said. "I'd say it was the toughest fight of my life."

Hatton mentioned Collazo's size and southpaw style as being the main difficulties. "He hurt me several times," he said. "I think I'm still a junior welter. The force of his shots moved me back. It was close and competitive, but I think I edged him." His matter-of-fact diplomacy seemed to cool off the hotheads, who had taken over the conference from the media and were asking him point blank for a rematch.

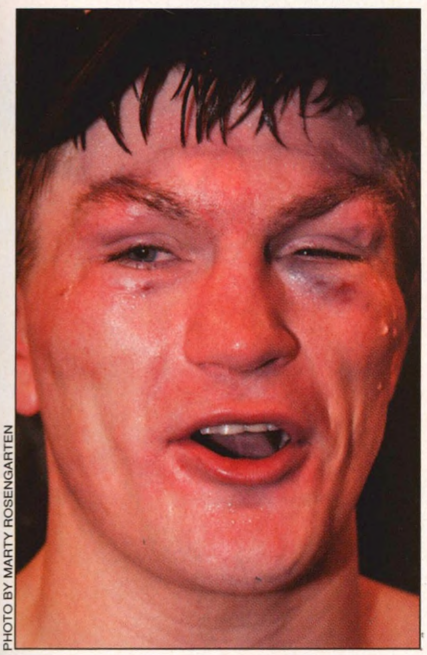

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Hatton's face took quite a pounding from Collazo. Afterward, Hatton acknowledged that he's really still only a junior welterweight and that Collazo had given him the toughest fight of his career.

"Yeah, why not," said Hatton, 41-0 (30). "He's a class act and a good fighter." As for being dirty in the ring, Hatton scoffed. "It's not a tickling contest, is it? Why do people think boxing has to be fought at a distance? There's a science to fighting close, as well. I need to get close to create openings for my uppercuts." When a friend of Collazo's demanded to know why Hatton held so much, Hatton said icily, "That's my game."

When the questions concerned Hatton's future opponents, Billy Graham, the hard-nosed trainer of Hatton, scowled at the press row. "He just fought a 12-round war, and you're already asking him about his next fight. Give him a break."

The CompuBox stats favored Hatton slightly (259 total blows landed compared to 213 for Collazo), but that didn't take into account that Collazo landed the harder shots. Still, it was Hatton who left Boston with the WBA belt and a "W 12" on his record.

Hatton will never achieve in America what he has in Manchester. American fans are clannish and prefer their own; there's already a bit of anti-Hatton sentiment circulating, mostly to do with his mauling style. Americans respond to big knockouts or super speed; Hatton is a squat, short-armed fighter who roughs out victories. Some will give him credit for leaving England in search of big fights; others will only see him as an overrated import. Like all outsiders, he'll have to work twice as hard to break through the guard of American cynics. Americans also prefer a strong finish. Had Hatton decked Collazo in the last frame instead of the first, there'd be less squabbling about the verdict.

With his welterweight debut and his first main event away from home completed, Hatton should be more relaxed next time. He was keyed up in the early rounds, giving no thought to pacing himself. Granted, pacing is not part of his makeup, but Hatton may need to consider it when fighting big welterweights. Graham has been vocal about Hatton staying at 140, but the money and HBO's interests are at 147. And while the non-British turnout for the Collazo fight was poor, Hatton vs. someone like Arturo Gatti in Atlantic City would be a blockbuster. Dangerous lightweights Diego Corrales and Jose Luis Castillo have been mentioned as future opponents, and Floyd Mayweather remains a possibility. Antonio Margarito, a giant, hard-hitting welterweight with a minor title belt, should probably be avoided.

In show business, there's a long tradition of taking a production bound for Broadway and giving it a "Boston tryout," a way to fine-tune the show before bringing it to New York. That's essentially what Hatton went through with Collazo. The reviews were mixed, but the show will go on. "It was my first fight at welterweight," said Hatton. "I will get better."

As for handling the American press, which had also been a concern, Hatton was fine. "I don't give anyone any bulls__t, and I don't expect them to give me any either," he told THE RING. "I'm just me." After some promotional problems last year in England, the young Brit feels he has a clean slate now. But in boxing, there's always a new snag just around the corner.

After the fight, when only the Garden's custodians remained in the building, Don King waddled jauntily out of a side exit where his limo was waiting. We may have imagined it, but he seemed to be whistling a happy tune. He smiled gaily when he saw us. "I think they'll do it again," he said, looking confident. It was past 2:00 a.m. Pungent clouds of steam rose from the Boston sewers, but as King's limo pulled into the haze, it was as if he were traveling directly into the famous London fog. ■

Don Stradley is a freelance writer from Massachusetts and a regular contributor to this magazine.

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/HBO

By Brian Doogan

New York, April 26, 2000—Lennox Lewis was heavyweight king; Emanuel Steward was his trusted guru. When Oliver McCall had threatened to deny Lewis his place in history, usurping the WBC heavyweight title in a damaging, almost destructive raid of his London stronghold, it was Steward whom Lewis had turned to. The master of his downfall (it was Steward who sent out McCall with instructions to drop the right hand bomb that felled and stopped Lewis in the second round) had become the power behind the throne. Now, three days before Lewis' defense of his crown against Michael Grant at Madison Square Garden, Steward was contemplating the champion's legacy.

"Lennox, to my mind, is the most talented heavyweight there's been in the whole history of boxing," said Steward.

PHOTO BY TORSTEN SILZ/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Klitschko's reemergence as a top heavyweight was engineered by Steward (opposite page), who did likewise with Lennox Lewis after Oliver McCall knocked him out. Klitschko's comeback reached new heights when he stopped Chris Byrd (above) in April to claim the number-one contender spot in THE RING ratings.

DEAD MAN WALKING

WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO REEMERGES UNDER MANNY'S STEWARDSHIP

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Even though he was down three times before winning a 12-round decision against thunderous-punching Samuel Peter in September 2005, Klitschko, according to Steward, gained a lot of confidence by prevailing in such a demanding encounter.

"He has everything. More than Joe Louis, more than Muhammad Ali, more than Marciano, Dempsey, Johnson, Frazier, Larry Holmes, Evander Holyfield, or George Foreman. What I've tried to do is simply bring it out."

Asked about the challenges Lewis might face in the coming years, Steward considered in his mind a list of prospective contenders and came up with just one name.

"I think the best up-and-coming fighter is the Klitschko brother, Wladimir, the younger one who's fighting on the card here [Klitschko would stop Dave Bostice in the second round, an hour or so before Lewis would do the same to Grant]. I think he has a tremendous amount of talent," declared Steward. "I don't know him at all, but the more I see him box, the more I think he has the makings of becoming a good, solid fighter, maybe even succeeding Lennox one day as champion. He has that kind of potential and, to be frank, I don't see it in anybody else."

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Mannheim, Germany, April 22, 2006—A smiling Klitschko, reveling in the aftermath of his seventh-round stoppage of Chris Byrd to topple THE RING's number one-ranked heavyweight and win the IBF heavyweight title, praised his trainer for the job he had done, for the success they had achieved together.

"Emanuel Steward is a great coach. He knows about strategies, technology, technique, and I enjoy working with him," revealed Klitschko. Flanked by Steward and his brother, Vitali, who got to Lewis first and succeeded him as champion, Klitschko had been rehabilitated by a thoroughly dominant performance.

"He's the best heavyweight today and he's well on the way to becoming one of the all-time great heavyweights," insisted Steward. "On his way up, he was the one I always told Lennox to look out for, and, despite what's happened over the years, a couple of defeats that caused a lot of people to question his ability to stay at the top, I've never changed my mind. I've always felt that Wladimir, from when I first saw him, had so much talent, and I thought it would be a challenge for me to try to develop what I consider to be a great talent, much like I did with Lennox.

"It took two years of working quietly, improving some things in his technique, but, most of all, reinforcing in his mind certain truths to rebuild Lennox after that defeat by McCall. I believed in Lennox and I believed in his talent, and that was the basis of his reaching the pinnacle, those fights with Holyfield and Mike Tyson and all those years that Lennox dominated the heavyweights. Wladimir can do this too. I have no doubt about it. Lennox is the best heavyweight I ever worked with, but Wladimir has the potential to be as good as him. That's the challenge. I'm going to take my time trying to develop his talent, because when I look around, I don't see anyone who's gonna beat him."

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The atmosphere in one corner of the La Brea Boxing Club in Los Angeles was almost funereal. While the elder Klitschko skipped rope by the side of the ring,

preparing for his own world title fight in less than two weeks against Corrie Sanders, his younger sibling sat with his head in his hands. Some reporters from Germany approached him but reluctantly, as if they had witnessed a little death. Three nights earlier, Wladimir had collapsed at the end of the fifth round against Lamon Brewster. Coming just a year after being stopped by Sanders (a shocking loss that Vitali would avenge to win THE RING's heavyweight belt), for many observers, his career looked over, certainly in the higher echelons.

"Wladimir Klitschko is just a six-round fighter who can't take it if the other guy dishes it out," Roy Jones had announced in a summing-up that might have been an obituary to the TV audience watching on HBO. Jones added that it looked bad for the Klitschkos and "the world of giants."

"Let me tell you a story," Klitschko said as he stood up and stepped out of the shadows, his face marked heavily by Brewster's heavy blows. "A light guy met a heavyweight guy and the heavyweight said that something so bad has happened. 'I came home a little early from my championship fight because I ended the fight in the opening round,' he said. 'But when I got home, I found my wife in bed with another man. So I took the man, threw a right hand straight to his jaw and knocked him out cold.'

"The light guy looked at him, his mouth wide open, and said, 'That's unbelievable. The same happened to me.' So he explained. 'I came home a little early from my fight, and what did I see? I saw my wife with another guy. So, I took the guy and threw a right straight to his jaw. Then I threw a left hook, a right hook, another left hook, followed by a combination, a second combination, a third combination. I believe I won on points.' This is the difference between me and Roy Jones."

PHOTOS BY ED MULHOLLAND/HBO

Against Byrd, the much-larger Klitschko used his long left jab (left) to set up right-hand bombs (below) that dropped Byrd twice before the much-smaller American was rescued in the seventh round.

PHOTO BY ALEXANDER HASSENSTEIN/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Steward rushes to congratulate his pupil after Klitschko stopped Byrd. The Hall of Fame trainer is convinced he can help make Wladimir the "dominating figure in heavyweight boxing."

Klitschko had lost none of his humor, but regaining his self-esteem was a different story.

"I was at the bottom of boxing after my fight with Brewster. Everything had been taken away, so much so that people, some people, did not rate me anymore," Klitschko reflected in the hours after his knockout of Byrd. "I spent a lot of time trying to find answers for a lot of questions after that fight. (It was alleged that Klitschko's disintegration might have been the result of dirty tricks, even that he may have been poisoned.) Unfortunately, I did not find anything, but I cannot even describe to you or say anything because, after the second round, I was fighting with myself to move in the ring. Clearly, something was wrong. But with many people, the respect was lost, and, to get the respect back, I had to go all the way.

"There were many questions. They said I had no chin, no confidence, no stamina, no balls, called me a dead man, a broken man, said all sorts of things. But I knew I belonged at the top of heavyweight boxing. Others might not have believed, but I believed. I always believed."

Steward shared his belief, and, together, they set about a restoration that mirrored Steward's reconstruction of Lewis.

"Wladimir's a very well-conditioned heavyweight who comes into camp pretty much weighing exactly what he's going to fight at, so that the time in training camp is spent on teaching and learning, and that's what we did," said Steward. "Much like I did with Lennox, we got down to the basics, working on more conventional American techniques to go along with his European style, without changing him completely."

Initially, the results were unconvincing. Reintroduced in a 10-rounder at Caesars Palace against DaVarryl Williamson, Klitschko struggled to impose himself, and his hesitancy contributed to the clash of heads that opened a cut over one of his eyes, forcing a technical decision after four rounds, which he won. His confidence was boosted by a straightforward fourth-round stoppage of Eliseo Castillo back in Germany in April 2005. Next, it was make or break against Samuel Peter, a squat, powerful knockout specialist whose reputation as "the new Tyson" proved flattering. Even so, Klitschko was forced to confront his demons. When asked what he learnt in a bout in which he was floored three times, he replied that "dead men can keep walking and walking and walking." Steward realized that their dream was very much alive.

"Samuel Peter was the most dangerous opponent out there, a guy who was knocking out everything in his path, and Wladimir had to show everything. He especially had to show what he was made of," said Steward. "It was similar, in a way, to Lennox's fight with Ray Mercer when he really had to get down in the trenches. But Wladimir did a lot of good things because, for the vast majority of the fight, he totally outboxed Peter, kept him on the end of his big, long jab, and utilized his strength and physical advantages. It was an important fight because coming through that kind of intense battle proved that he could come through anything. Even in the 12th round, he was throwing punches and hurting the guy. He was very confident, therefore, going into the fight with Byrd.

Klitschko had the added reassurance of having beaten the 35-year-old resident of Las Vegas back in October 2000 by a wide, unanimous decision. Crucially, he also knew that Byrd, unlike Peter, could not hurt him. It was a matchup made for his reemergence and vindication.

"Chris Byrd has lots of strengths and is very gifted in terms of his skill, but what he doesn't have is big punching power like Wladimir and, physically, he's not as big. These were big factors," acknowledged Steward. "There was a time when he was a little nervous against those big guys, when he faced Wladimir for the first time, but, since then, he'd fought Golota, McCline, Oquendo, and Holyfield. He'd got used to being the small guy in the ring. But Wladimir was able to demonstrate that he's improved, that he's assertive again, and that he means business. There was a ruthlessness with which he went about his job from the opening bell."

From the moment in the second round when Klitschko, 241, caught Byrd, 213½, with a solid straight right, having been setting him up with his jab, the issue was never in doubt. About 14,000 fans inside the SAP Arena knew that they would be witness to the big comeback they had yearned for. Klitschko's popularity stayed strong in Germany, even in those long, dark days, and the 30-year-old Ukrainian was about to justify this steadfast support. Byrd survived the second round, but kept eating the jab in the third. An attempted fourth-round rally, when he tried to hustle his 6'6" opponent in close, came to nothing, for the fifth was a big round for Klitschko, 46-3 (41), who finally sent Byrd, 39-3-1 (20), to the canvas, his right hand and his jab thudding into the American's face like a wrecking ball.

By the start of the seventh, Byrd's face had puffed up and his right eye was closing fast. Klitschko looked like he was stepping out for a run in the park. Then a succession of hard jabs preceded a heavy right that exploded off Byrd's jaw. Another right followed and a third, which landed on Byrd's left eye. Finally, a right hook sent the brave, beleaguered Byrd to the canvas, and referee Wayne Kelly waved it over at the 0:47 mark. Klitschko's business had been brutal, and it needed to be.

"I wanted Wladimir to win by a knockout because this sent out an emphatic message," said Steward. "No one could deny this was a most impressive performance, a total annihilation of a tricky, clever, skillful boxer who's only ever been stopped by one other man (Ike Ibeabuchi, in 1999) in a 13-year career. Byrd's no easy opponent for anybody, believe me. But Wladimir was able to make the fight easy by doing what he does best, controlling the action with his jab and using it to set up those big right hands that could take out any heavyweight in the world. This fight was a statement of intent, a statement of Wladimir's talents, which I've always been convinced will make him a dominating figure in heavyweight boxing."

Boxing, of course, is more than a test of skill. Ultimately, it is the examination of a man's faculties under siege. Belief has been Klitschko's greatest shortfall over a period that threatened to see his talents submerged beneath the crises of defeats against Sanders and Brewster, setbacks that pointed to a suspect chin and a debilitating stamina problem. Lewis was once caught up in the same heavy storm, but, with Steward by his side, he emerged as a champion of considerable distinction. Klitschko has much to live up to, but he is in good hands. ■

Brian Doogan is THE RING's European correspondent.

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May 1990: Big George Talks Tough: "Tyson Won't Be That Difficult!" Plus: Ed Hopson, Russian fighters, grudge wars, Archie Moore, Kid Berg, Marcel Cerdan, Chavez-Cortes.

June 1990: Buster! How James Douglas Shocked The World. Plus: Michael Moorer, Camacho-Paez, Tommy Farr, excuses, Dick Tiger, Ruben Olivares-Jeff Chandler.

July 1990: "I'm Hungrier Than Ever Before," By Evander Holyfield. Plus: James Toney, Buddy McGirt, Glenwood Brown, Aaron Davis, Michael Carbajal, Jorge Paez, Kid Gavilan, Mark Breland, Ali-Liston II (color).

Sept. 1990: Marvin Hagler—Can He Resist The Irresistible Temptation? Plus: Thomas Hearns, Sanchez-Saddler, Paul Banke, puncher vs. chin, Beau Jack, Robinson-LaMotta (color).

Nov. 1990: Tyson vs. Foreman. Can Iron Mike Stop The Blast From The Past? Plus: Bruce Seldon, best chins, Sullivan-Kilrain (color), Azumah Nelson, LaStarza.

Dec. 1990: Exclusive Annual Report: The State Of The Game. Plus: Douglas-Holyfield preview, Julio Cesar Chavez, Joe Grim, Whitaker-Nazario, Rosi-Van Horn, Benny Leonard, Douglas-Tyson (color).

Feb. 1991: Boxing On TV—Now You'll Pay! Plus: Ismael Laguna, Tommy Morrison in *Rocky V*, Reggie Tuur, Chiquita Gonzalez, Harold Green, Joe Louis.

April 1991: Julio Cesar Chavez—Fighter Of The Year. Plus: Tyson-Stewart, James Leija, Wilfred Benitez, Pedro Decima, Moore-Bassey.

June 1991: Pain, Frustration, Confidence, And Hope: Meldrick Taylor's Life After Chavez. Plus: Foreman-Holyfield preview, Norris-Leonard, David Kamau, Freddie Steele, Bennie Briscoe, Leonard's career (color).

July 1991: Tyson's Title Hopes: He Ain't What He Used To Be ... But It's Not Gonna Matter. Plus: Eusebio Pedroza, Myung Woo Yuh, Willie Meehan, Hearns-Hill preview, computer junior welterweight tournament, Gomez-Fenech, controversial heavyweight finishes (color).

Aug. 1991: Foreman Gives Holyfield A Fight ... And The World A Thrill (color). Plus: Making weight, Harry Greb, Kevin Kelley, Louis-Conn I, Simon Brown-Blocker, Chavez-Duplessis, Sugar Ray Robinson.

July 1992: Does Larry Holmes Deserve A Title Shot? Plus: Nelson-Fenech II, Tracy Patterson, Kelley-Dorsey, fat fighters, Buchanan-Camacho, Holmes-Ali (color).

Aug. 1992: Holyfield-Holmes Prefight. Holmes: "I See Me Takin' Holyfield Outta There." Plus: Iran Barkley, Herbie Hide, George Foreman, Tex Cobb, Carnival of Champions, Harry Greb, Haugen-Mancini, Oscar De La Hoya, Gene Tunney (color).

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Feb. 1993: America's Tribute To The Brown Bomber: Joe Louis. Plus: Virgil Hill, Junior Jones, Roger Mayweather, Chicago boxing, Orlando Zulueta, Jose Napoles (color).

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May 1993: Oscar De La Hoya's Sprint To The Title: Is He Good Enough *Now?* Plus: Carbajal-Gonzalez preview, Lennox Lewis, The Ring Poll, Freddie Pendleton.

Aug. 1994: Bowe's Back! Determined To Do It Again. Plus: Eric Griffin, Pernell Whitaker, Ray Mercer, Roger Donoghue, State of the Game (midterm report), All-Time Top 10: The Philippines.

Dec. 1994: Fighting-Mad! James Toney Just Wants To Beat People Up. Plus: Duran & Robinson, Don King, Mike McCallum, injuries (part II), Tom Molineaux.

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Jan. 1996: King Bruno! A Hero Always ... A Winner At Last. Plus: Julio Cesar Chavez, Oscar De La Hoya, Chris Eubank, Eddie Perkins, who's hot/who's not.

Feb. 1996: Bowe's The Man (For Now), But Is He Man Enough For Tyson? Plus: Lennox Lewis, Hamed-Barrera, Paul Banke, Vince Phillips, boxing on Madison Ave., What If ... Leonard-Pryor.

Nov. 1996: Pole-Axed! Low Blows, Sinking Bowe, Ugly Show. Plus: Bowe-Golota I, Blinky Palermo, exciting fighters, Winky Wright, Joe Brown.

June 1997 (Special Collector's Issue): Holyfield-Tyson II: What It Means For Now ... And Forever. Plus: Holyfield-Tyson fight poster, Naseem Hamed, computer unification, Sayers-Heenan, state of the game.

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Jan. 1999: Sugar Shane Mosley: The Sweet Tradition Continues. Plus: Evander Holyfield, Julio Cesar Chavez, Erik Morales, Ray "Windmill" White.

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Holiday 1999 (92-Page Special): Heavyweight Showdowns! Holyfield vs. Lewis II, Grant vs. Golota. Plus: Francois Botha, Arturo Gatti, Michael Carbajal, Rocky Marciano, Lou Filippo.

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Dec. 2001: The Rock Promises Another Shock! "I'm Gonna Knock Lennox Out Again!" Plus: David Reid, Jones-Gonzalez, McCline-Grant, Jackie Graves, ring deaths.

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April 2006 (100-Page Extra): Ricky Hatton: Britain's First Fighter Of The Year. Plus: Year-end awards, Jermain Taylor, Calzaghe-Lacy preview, Israel Vazquez, Zsolt Erdei.

June 2006 (100-Page Extra): Who Needs The Heavyweights? Plus: De La Hoya-Mayorga preview, Pacquiao-Morales, Carlos Baldomir, Castillo-Reyes, Alvin Felicilda, Jason Litzau, Turpin brothers.

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Special Section:

THE CONTENDER on ESPN

A Welcome Revival on a Smaller Stage

PHOTOGRAPHY BY BLUE PIXEL 2006 JMBP INC.

By William Dettloff

If you care at all about the health of the fight business or even if you just can't get enough boxing in your life, the breath had to go out of you at least a little when you heard last year that NBC wasn't bringing *The Contender* back for another season. Sure, it averaged six or seven million viewers a week even as they bounced it all over the schedule. And yes, 10 million people watched the finale (not to mention the thousands who sold out Caesars Palace in Las Vegas), and those seemed like pretty good numbers to us. But, by the time Sergio Mora outpointed Peter Manfredo Jr. to walk away with the million-dollar prize, the decision had already been made.

While those numbers might represent a success on cable-television, on network TV, well, not so much. So it was goodbye to Sly, Sugar Ray, and friends, and boxing's first substantive network TV presence in a quarter-century bit the dust. Come on, you knew it was too good to be true.

Just when we were mourning the show's demise, we got the good news that ESPN picked it up and would return with another season. No, it wouldn't have the potential audience it did on NBC, the budget wouldn't be nearly as big as it had been—purportedly a million an episode with the big boys during season one—and certainly the production values couldn't possibly be as high as they were on deep-pocketed NBC. If nothing else, ESPN picking up the show meant that much more boxing on television, and that couldn't be bad.

So here we are. The show premiers on July 18 at 10:00 p.m. Eastern and will run for 12 weeks, every Tuesday, with the finale airing on September 26. A dozen hour-long shows, and a two-hour finale to be broadcast from the Staples Center. Naturally, you have questions: What will it look like? What will be different? What will be the same? Who will be there from season one, and who will be gone? Will it be better or worse?

The cast of the second season of* The Contender, *which debuts on ESPN, July 18. The budget is smaller, but the concept is pretty much the same as the first season and all of the contestants hope to use the show as a springboard to further success.

Sylvester Stallone and Jackie Kallen are gone, but Jeremy Williams, Sugar Ray Leonard, and Tommy Gallagher are back for the second season. While Leonard is boxing royalty, Williams and Gallagher add some blue-collar grit to the cast.

The answer to that last question is this, and it puts the entire season in a nutshell: If you liked season one, you'll like season two. If you didn't like it, you'll probably feel the same way this time around, because it's essentially the same show, albeit with a few important differences.

First the personnel changes: Sylvester Stallone is gone. Maybe that's good news to you, maybe it isn't. Maybe you liked how he critiqued the fighters at the end of each show as if he really was a fighter rather than a guy who played one in the movies. Maybe, for you, the best scene out of the entire season was the one that showed him "sparring," without headgear, throwing a series of right hooks at a guy's elbow and then nearly collapsing from exhaustion. Maybe you too were endlessly fascinated by the strange river of veins that traverse his arms and look strangely at odds with the rest of physique, impressive though it is for a man in his late-50s.

There are good things to say about the job Stallone did in the first season. For one, the fighters all appeared to have man-crushes on him, and why not? Stallone has always been a huge supporter of the fight game, and, if he never did another thing for it after making *Rocky* in 1976, it would have been enough. His enthusiasm and relaxed jocularity with co-host Sugar Ray Leonard never looked fake or put-on, even if it was painful to listen to him host and call the fights during the season finale. Rambo was no broadcaster.

Still, Stallone was critical to getting the show sold to NBC in the first place. He supplied the necessary star power the network was looking for to draw in the non-boxing crowd and general sports fans. Either way, he is out. We couldn't get anyone at Mark Burnett Productions to tell us why, exactly, though clearly the filming took place at or around the same time Stallone was filming his latest *Rocky* epic, so there you go. At any rate, he is not replaced in the second season, and all hosting duties, therefore, fall on the slim shoulders of one Ray Charles Leonard.

How this works out remains to be seen. Leonard's painfully deliberate manner of speaking, his obvious self-importance and rehearsed platitudes were grating to many viewers when he shared hosting duties with Stallone. We can only hope his workload is parsed out evenly over each hour-long episode, lest we be forced on occasion to exercise our mute buttons. Like Stallone, however, he enjoys near god-like status among the fighters, and that takes some of the awkwardness out of watching him pick through a sentence like he's plucking onions from a garden salad. Also gone is Jackie Kallen, whose role in season one, purportedly, was that of "den mother." We can only guess that meant when the fighters felt weepy about this or that (and they were that an awful lot of the time, weren't they?), she was the mother figure to whom they turned for comfort.

Now, we've got nothing against Kallen, who sure as hell worked hard to make it in an overwhelmingly male-dominated sport. We don't even hold against Kallen that god-awful movie they made based on her life. But her value and participation was marginal at best in the first season, and there was no reason to revive it in season two. She's a dignified lady and our guess is she was as relieved as we are when she got the news she wasn't needed again. So Kallen is out.

Gone too are the silly "challenges" that struck a sour note with viewers during season one. "The challenges were very reality show-ish, and we realized we didn't need them anymore," said Executive Producer Lisa Hennessey, of Mark Burnett Productions. Judging by fan feedback on the Internet and in magazines, that's a welcome change. The challenges were despised nearly universally.

No one understood why or cared much about one team's ability to hoist heavy bags onto Toyota Tundras or race one another pulling large cumbersome objects behind them. Not only did the tasks have nothing to do with boxing, but also the fighters exposed themselves to serious injury; at least two pulled muscles during challenges. To top it all off, Leonard's voice-overs during the events were excruciating.

Ditching the challenges also gives the show more time to devote to, well, fights. "It gives us a bit more time for boxing," said Hennessey. "We're more focused on behind-the–scenes things and the training fighters go through. There's definitely more action." Unfortunately, Hennessey was loath to tell us

The Season One CONTENDER Cast: An Update

SERGIO MORA 18-0 (4): Mora's off-the-floor win over Archak TerMeliksetian in May represented a decent test against a good puncher, and "The Latin Snake" came through impressively.

PHOTO BY DANNY MOLOSHOK/ESPN

Mora catches TerMeliksetian with a left uppercut

PETER MANFREDO 25-3 (11): Forget about Manfredo fighting Joe Calzaghe. It's a slaughter. But his win over Scott Pemberton was explosive, even if Pemberton was shot.

JOEY GILBERT 11-1 (8): Gilbert rebounded from his season one loss to Manfredo with a decision over James North and a knockout of fellow Contender Jimmy Lange in a rematch to their first meeting, also won by Gilbert.

ALFONSO GOMEZ 14-3-2 (5): Gomez got all he could handle and then some from tough-as-nails trialhorse Jesse Feliciano in their third meeting, which was appropriately scored a draw. He's got a long road ahead.

JIMMY LANGE 26-3-1 (18): Lange has had mixed results since getting knocked off season one by Gilbert. He beat Tarick Salmaci and Perry Ballard, but got trounced by Gilbert in their rematch.

JONATHAN REID 34-4 (19): Nice guy. Not much of a fighter. Reid has dropped three out of his last four at this writing.

MIGUEL ESPINO 12-2-1 (4): In wins over Reid, Dorian Beaupierre, and Gabriel Holguin, Espino looked much better than he did losing to Manfredo in season one.

ANTHONY BONSANTE 26-7-3 (15): Bonsante's dropped four of his last five at this writing, even if he did get ripped off in the rematch with Jesse Brinkley. Too bad Tony Ayala isn't fighting anymore.

JESSE BRINKLEY 26-3 (17): Brinkley has been maybe the show's biggest disappointment, with the only win in his last three fights being the gift he got over Bonsante in their rematch.

JUAN DE LA ROSA 6-0 (4): We wouldn't have been surprised if De La Rosa never fought again after walking away for no good reason in season one, but he's fought twice since, beating Jesse Orta and Tremayne Hines.

ISHE SMITH 16-1 (7): In his only ring appearance post season one, Smith pounded out a unanimous decision over Bonsante in May '05. He was scheduled to face an opponent to be named in Atlantic City in June as we went to press.

JEFF FRAZA 17-2 (10): Fraza lost to the chicken pox in season one, but returned with wins over Paul Delgado and fellow *Contender* alumnus Brent Cooper. He returns to the show in the second season.

AHMED KADDOUR 19-2 (9): Season one's pretty boy rebounded in July '05 with an eight-round decision win over once-beaten Maxell Taylor in California.

TARICK SALMACI 19-3 (5): Was beaten by Lange in his only outing since losing to De La Rosa in season one. Not a good sign if he decided to continue fighting.

BRENT COOPER 20-5-2 (15): Cowboy Brent has dropped three straight at this writing, two by knockout. It may be time to retire to the ranch.

—W.D.

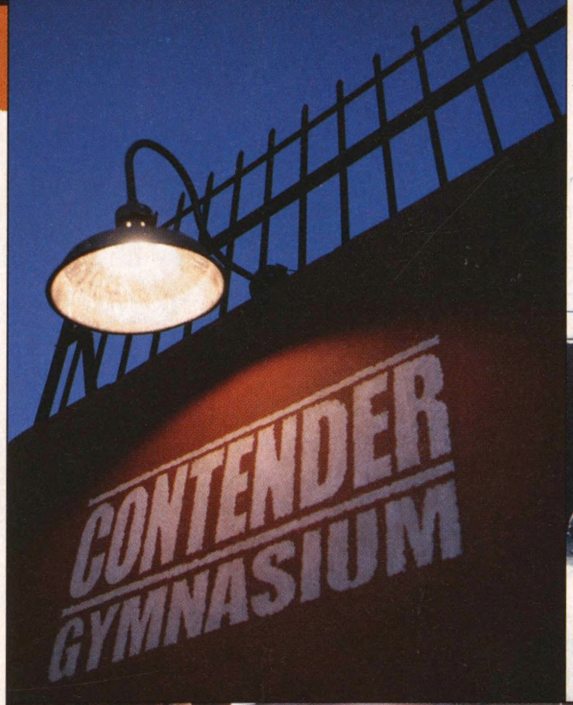
by what mechanism it would be determined who fought whom, which was really the reason for the challenges to begin with. "You'll have to wait for the show to start," she said.

So, Stallone is out, Kallen is gone, and so are the challenges, along with, presumably, the "rewards" that accompanied them. Also, the weight class is welterweight, rather than middleweight. The gym and contender housing is now located in a new facility in downtown Los Angeles. And, oh yes, prize money for first place is $500,000, rather than a million (that pesky smaller budget again). So far so good. Nothing really to complain about, even if we wouldn't have minded Stallone hanging in there for another season. What's coming back?

Tommy Gallagher reprises his role as a trainer and mentor, and we think that's a plus. In fact, we hope Gallagher gets more face time this season. Gallagher is a real fight guy and is just a dented nose and a little scar tissue away from being the trainer you've seen in every great old fight movie. He's suitably tough on the fighters in this age of pampered athletes, and his old-school approach is just what's needed to counter some of the whining we get from the softer-hearted guys. We only wish we were able to get the full effect of his colorful use of the language (listen up, ESPN). And after all that, you've got to love the hats.

Returning too as a trainer is one-time heavyweight contender Jeremy Williams, who seemed to us in season one rather an odd choice as a regular, though he did grow on us as the series unfolded. The suits like him too. "Jeremy Williams is a fantastic personality," said Hennessey. "He's a good guy, he's articulate, and he really knows boxing. He's just a great personality for the show." For viewers who know Williams and his history as a heavyweight contender, his presence does add another touch of authenticity to the proceedings.

In a surprise, Jeff Fraza is back too. You'll recall Fraza as the fighter who had to leave during the first season because, in an improbable stroke of horrendous luck, he contracted chicken pox. Hennessey says they brought him back because the show liked him very much and felt badly about his leaving under those circumstances. It may work out better for Fraza in the long run. A natural welterweight/junior middle, he



There's also a new gym and residence for the second season. The training facilities aren't quite as swank as previously (top right), but the living quarters are definitely roomy and nicely furnished (above left and above right). And, in typical college-dorm style, the house rules (right) are posted for all to see.

was clearly outsized among middleweights in the first season.

Hennessey says the casting criterion was exactly the same, but that the producers had to sort through double the number of applicants as compared to the first time around. "We had a lot more people because the show was such a success and fighters saw what a great way it is for them to showcase their talent," she said. A by-product of that, she said, is that the fights are more exciting. "The fights are so much more competitive. They really fight hard. People are going to be surprised at how exciting the fights are."

Also returning, and this is where it gets dicey, is the cinematic editing of the fights that was such a source of contention among viewers in season one. Viewers essentially fell into two camps. The first was most general sports fans (see "non-boxing fans") who didn't mind the slow-motion editing and the quick reaction shots at ringside of concerned family members and show regulars, such as Leonard and Stallone. To this group, boxing really could resemble a ballet if produced right. Every fight looked a little like a fight scene out of *Raging Bull* or, yes, *Rocky*. It was boxing made sexy. Fights gone Hollywood—but still fights.

The other camp consisted primarily of hardcore fight junkies who don't need anyone messing with their fights. They can see which punches land and which don't, they know the sound a leather glove makes when it connects with skin, and they're not much interested in drama enhanced by slow motion editing. These viewers want to see the whole fight so they can judge for themselves who won.

The first camp will be happy. As in the first season, you won't see three minutes of a round, and except for the final show, you won't see live fights. "The editing is very much the same as in the first season," said Hennessey. "It's very cinematic and dramatic." It's not hard to see why the producers went this way again. The first season was received very well by media critics in large part because of the drama—not only of the fighters' personal lives, but of the fights as well. Media outlets that normally wouldn't give boxing a second thought, such as *The New York Times*, praised the show's format, even as it dismissed the sport itself. It's the drama of the game that will appeal to general fans and draw viewers to the show. The boxing junkies will be there either way.

"We give boxing fans and drama fans the best of both worlds," said Hennessey. "True boxing fans can watch the live shows that we do (such as the card that aired in early-May featuring fighters from the first season), as well as the regular series, and non-boxing fans get the drama of the series."

Translation: If you want the fights and nothing but the fights, there's plenty out there for you. Watch *Friday Night Fights* or the fights on Showtime, HBO, Telefutura, HBO Latino, MSG Network, Fox, whatever. But if you want the fights told in a different way, at a different speed, and you want to know the fighters behind the fights and learn their stories, then watch *The Contender*. Or watch both. It doesn't have to be one or the other. You can never get too much of a good thing. ■

NICK ACEVEDO

By Frank Krewda

Take away the television cameras, and *The Contender* is just another boxing tournament, as far as Nick Acevedo is concerned. And it's exactly that perspective that the 30-year-old feels will distinguish him from the rest of the 150-pound field.

"I'll win because of my relaxation," Acevedo said. "I'm just so comfortable in the ring."

He should be. Growing up in Manhattan's Lower East Side, Acevedo was the quintessential gym rat, joining his father, Edward, and older brothers, George and Danny, for daily workouts since the age of five.

By time he was seven years old, Acevedo had competed in his first Junior Golden Gloves tournament. It was the start of an impressive amateur career that included Golden Gloves victories on the local, national, and international levels, several Junior Olympic victories, and a tryout for the 1992 Olympic team.

Acevedo lost in the qualifiers, and turned pro in December 1992, defeating Henry Purdy in White Plains, New York. Despite his impressive debut, however, Acevedo, a welterweight, found bouts hard to come by, fighting only 16 times over the next 10 years.

Acevedo faced his first real test when he took on former IBF junior welterweight titleholder Vince Phillips in March 2002. Prior to the fight, a confident Acevedo promised to "put an ass whipping on that old man." Nonetheless, the "old man" had Acevedo eating his words, tagging him with hard rights throughout en route to a 10-round unanimous decision.

It was the classic case of a fighter underestimating his opponent. "We figured the guy was past his prime, not as serious as he once was, and we slacked up," said Acevedo. "Even in the training, we just didn't do what we normally do."

The loss to Phillips coincided with a series of promotional and managerial difficulties that led to a release from Cedric Kushner Promotions and the temporary cessation of Acevedo's ring career. The pressure of rebounding from the loss and the frustration of trying to find fights had sapped his passion and resolve. By 2003, Acevedo was out of the sport.

His premature exit from the ring didn't ease the more intense and important pressures he faced as a single father of five children, ranging in age from toddler to teen. Nick had tried to prepare for life outside the ring by attaining a computer technician certification in 2000. But just as opportunity in the Sweet Science had petered out, so did the prospects for upward mobility in the computer industry. "The market kinda closed up," noted Acevedo. "Computers fix themselves nowadays."

With no computer work coming his way, Acevedo, 15-1 (9), took a job as a personal trainer at a local gym. And, as happens so often in life, one seemingly unrelated decision led to a chain of events that could end up changing the trajectory of his life.

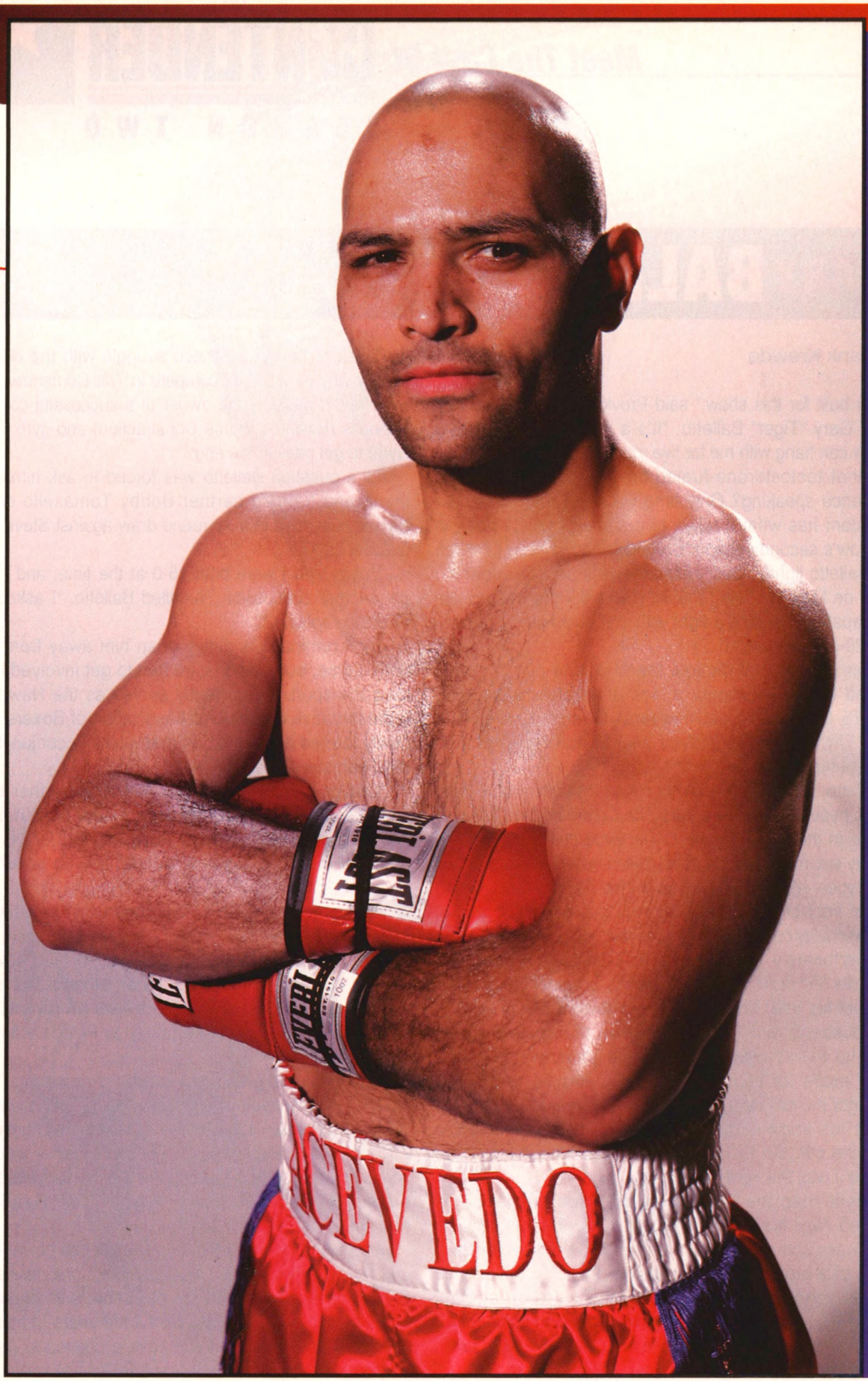
"I was working out with some friends in the gym, and I was thinking about getting some fights. This was around the time the show had come out, and they said, you should go audition for *The Contender*. And I was like, 'Yeah, *The Contender*, whatever.' Then I thought, *it couldn't hurt*. So I went out to California to see what would happen, and sure enough, they kept calling me back."

In love with the weather and atmosphere of Los Angeles and feeling better about his luck, Acevedo now sees opportunity where he once saw only pressure and frustration. He's confident in his skills and is determined to make the most of the opportunity. "I'm gonna ride this until the wheels fall off," Acevedo said of *The Contender*.

How long will that ride last? Probably as long as his power gives him the edge over the rest of the field. Of course, Acevedo is well-aware of the fact that most of his knockouts came early in his career, more than 10 years ago, against suspect opponents. Still, Acevedo feels the ability to score big and often against his opponents is still there. The biggest challenges, as he sees it, are conditioning and focus. "I had to drop 55 pounds to make the 150-pound cap, but I took the weight off with no problem," he said. "It was just a lot of hard work."

Maintaining focus might prove a bit more challenging. Keeping a regular job (Acevedo currently works as a mortgage broker), raising five children, and training for a comeback on a national television show are enough to wear down even the most committed person. But Acevedo, optimistic and grateful for the chance, said his children support him 100 percent. "They love the fighting," he said. "It's the time away that bothers them."

Acevedo is currently motivated to make boxing his full-time job, not to satiate his own passions, but to provide a better life for his children. "I'm a father first, a fighter second," he said.


EVERLAST
ACEVEDO

GARY BALLETTO

By Frank Krewda

"I'm built for this show," said Providence, Rhode Island, native Gary "Tiger" Balletto. "It's a five-round brawl, and nobody can hang with me for five rounds."

Is that testosterone-fueled bravado or well-founded confidence speaking? Only time will tell if this *Contender* contestant has what it takes to outlast his fellow pugs in the show's second season. Certainly, nobody can afford to take Balletto lightly. Over his seven-year pro career, which began on May 11, 1996, the 30-year-old Tiger has proven he's capable of ending a fight with one punch while compiling a 29-2-2 (25) record.

From the start, Balletto's brand of one-punch power allowed him to overcome a lack of amateur seasoning (just 15 bouts) and earn several Golden Gloves and Junior Olympic championships prior to making his professional debut.

Balletto, however, draws his confidence from more than just his heavy fists as he enters *The Contender*. He believes his role in the recent movie *Sweet Dreams*—a 2005 documentary set in Providence about Italian-American culture and stereotypes—gives him a leg up on the competition. "Having been in front of the camera before, I can be myself and let my personality come through. I see that as an advantage."

Unfortunately, some of the most important people in Balletto's life don't exactly share his confidence. There's no doubt his wife, Kristina, and their three children support their husband and father, but given the choice, they'd rather he wasn't mixed up in the fight game. And the trepidation made for some anxious moments when Balletto finally got the call from *Contender* producers after auditioning for the show in New York. Sure, he was thrilled to make the cut, but inclusion meant he'd have to convince his wife it was the right thing to do.

Considering the laundry list of injuries Balletto has endured over his career, you could forgive his family's uneasiness about his decision to go for it. The cumulative effects of a broken jaw, cracked ribs, fractured hands, and several concussions—including one suffered against Gregorio Vargas in 2003 that left him with symptoms for 18 months and ultimately chased him from the ring—have taken a toll on his body and his loved ones' psyches.

Balletto's family must also struggle with the question of exactly why he wants to compete in *The Contender*. After all, what would possess the owner of a successful construction business (Balletto's Home Construction) and gym (Balletto's Gym) to get back in the ring?

It's a question Balletto was forced to ask himself when friend and training partner Bobby Tomasello died from injuries sustained in a 10-round draw against Steve Dotse in October 2000.

"Bobby and I were both 15-0 at the time, and I had just got another concussion," recalled Balletto. "I asked myself: *Why am I fighting?*"

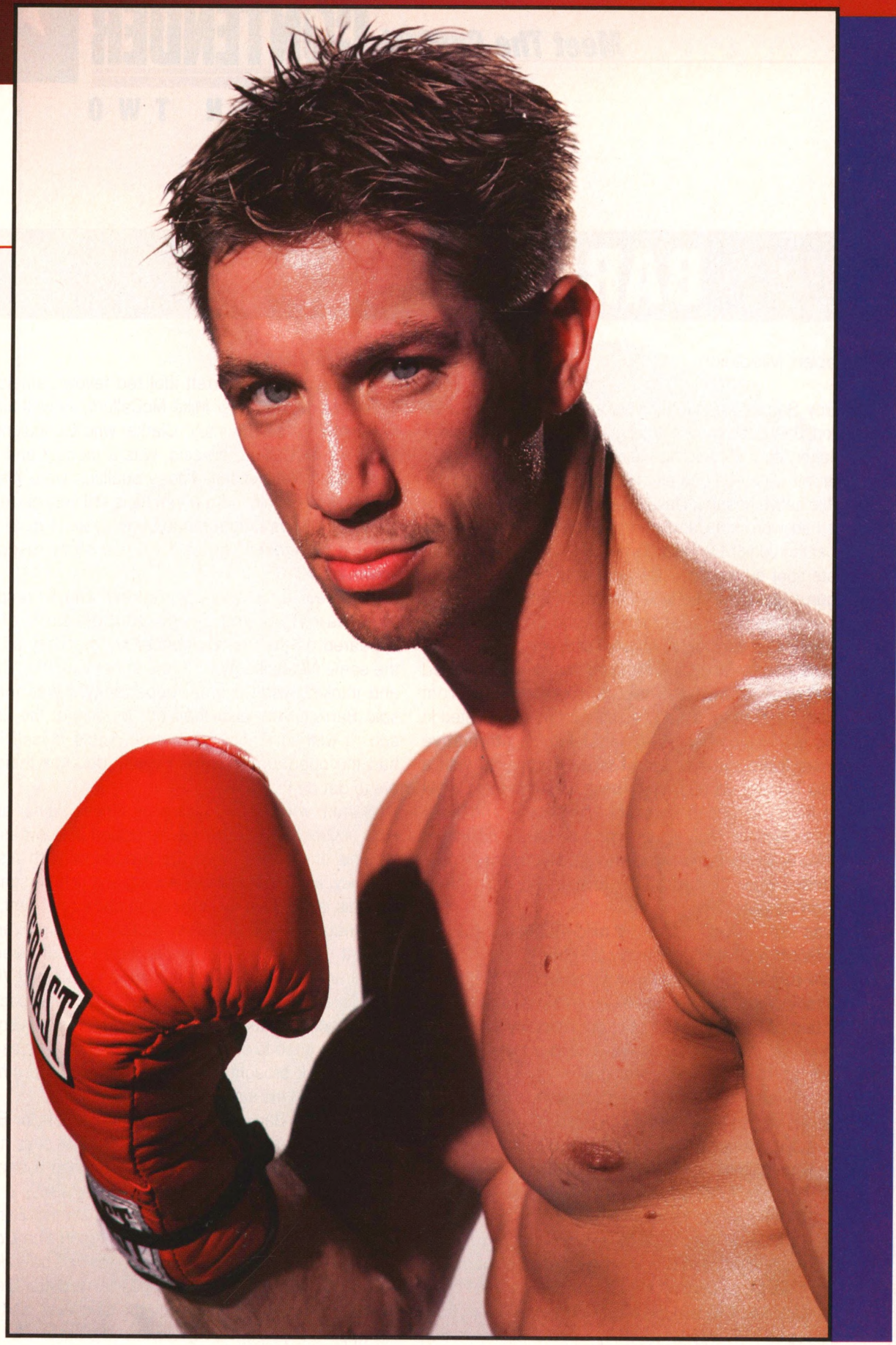
Such ruminations didn't wean him away from the ring at that time, but it did inspire him to get involved in unionizing the sport. He currently serves as the New England representative of the Joint Association of Boxers (JAB), a newly formed boxers' union that works in conjunction with the Teamsters.

"Our goal is to get boxers health and other benefits, just like any other job," Balletto explains. But progress and participation has been slow and the jury is still out on whether JAB will gain a toehold among boxers coast-to-coast.

But just as his family's objections didn't prevent Balletto from entering *The Contender*, adversity isn't likely to deter him from fighting for boxers' benefits. In fact, adversity is nothing new to Balletto, who, as an athletic and energetic kid, took up the sport at age 12, despite his parents' wishes, after his mother moved the family to Florida following his father's death.

"My father and grandfather boxed as amateurs," Balletto recalls. "But my mother and father really didn't want me to become a fighter." Determined to satiate his fighting spirit, nevertheless, Balletto hooked up with a trainer who lived in his neighborhood and learned the rudiments before moving back to Providence to train under Kurt Reader, who remains Balletto's trainer to this day.

As Balletto looks back on all he's put into boxing—and all that it *hasn't* given back—he sees *The Contender* as a way to balance the ledger. "To me, this show is an opportunity to make boxing pay off," he said. "All the years of training and dieting, all the injuries, now I have a chance to make it all mean something."


EVERLAST

VINROY BARRETT

By Robert Mladinich

Vinroy Barrett was working as a bellhop in his native Kingston, Jamaica, when a hotel guest noticed a front-page newspaper story chronicling his ring exploits. It was 1997 and Barrett was regarded as one of the best amateur boxers in his native country. Having begun boxing at the age of 14, he had won four Jamaican championships, a bronze medal at the Junior Olympic Games in Puerto Rico, and an alternate spot on the 1996 Olympic team. To say that the hotel guest was surprised would be an understatement. He had been visiting the resort for years and the unassuming Barrett, who had exchanged chitchat with him on numerous occasions, had never once mentioned that he was a fighter.

The guest, a well-connected businessman from Nashville, Tennessee, asked Barrett if he was interested in fighting professionally. After receiving an affirmative response, the businessman arranged for him to visit a Nashville gym for an audition. Barrett was thrilled to meet former heavyweight titleholders Greg Page and Tony Tucker, as well as Nick Rupa, who had once challenged Terry Norris for the junior middleweight title. He was even more thrilled when they asked him to spar and complimented him on his style.

"I was like, 'Whoa!'" said the mild-mannered Barrett, whose record is 21-4 (11). "It really felt good."

Since turning professional in October 1997, Barrett, whose nickname is "Slick," has experienced no shortage of career bumps. "I got a lot of calls on Thursday to fight on Saturday," he said. "If I got a week or two notice, it was always to fight above my weight class."

Due to the fact he is not aligned with a promoter, Barrett has been forced to take fights on the road. Three of his four losses were by decision, in Tucson, Arizona, Chester, West Virginia, and Cicero, Illinois. The Illinois bout, which took place in October 2005, was a heartbreaking loss to former title challenger Jose Luis Lopez.

"I heard that he was a really big puncher, so I really wanted to fight him," said Barrett. "I'm a boxer, not a puncher. I don't like to get beat up if I don't have to, but everyone I fight knows that I was in the ring with them. I could have beaten Lopez if I stepped up the pressure a little earlier. That was my fault."

As a youngster, Barrett idolized fellow Jamaican and three-division titleholder Mike McCallum, as well as a local flyweight Richard "Shrimpy" Clarke, who campaigned from 1981-'93. McCallum, he said, was a modest and humble man, much like himself. Those qualities were instilled in Barrett by his family, with whom he is still very close.

"They always taught me to show respect to all people, not just my elders," he said. "If you show respect, it is shown back."

Two people for whom Barrett has a lot of respect are Jonathan Reid and Brent Cooper, both of whom appeared on the first *Contender* series. They all train at the same Nashville gym. "I remember watching the show and thinking what a great opportunity it was for them," said Barrett, who also tried out for a spot the first season. "I wished that I was on too. I told myself if I ever had the opportunity again, I would do everything possible to get on the show."

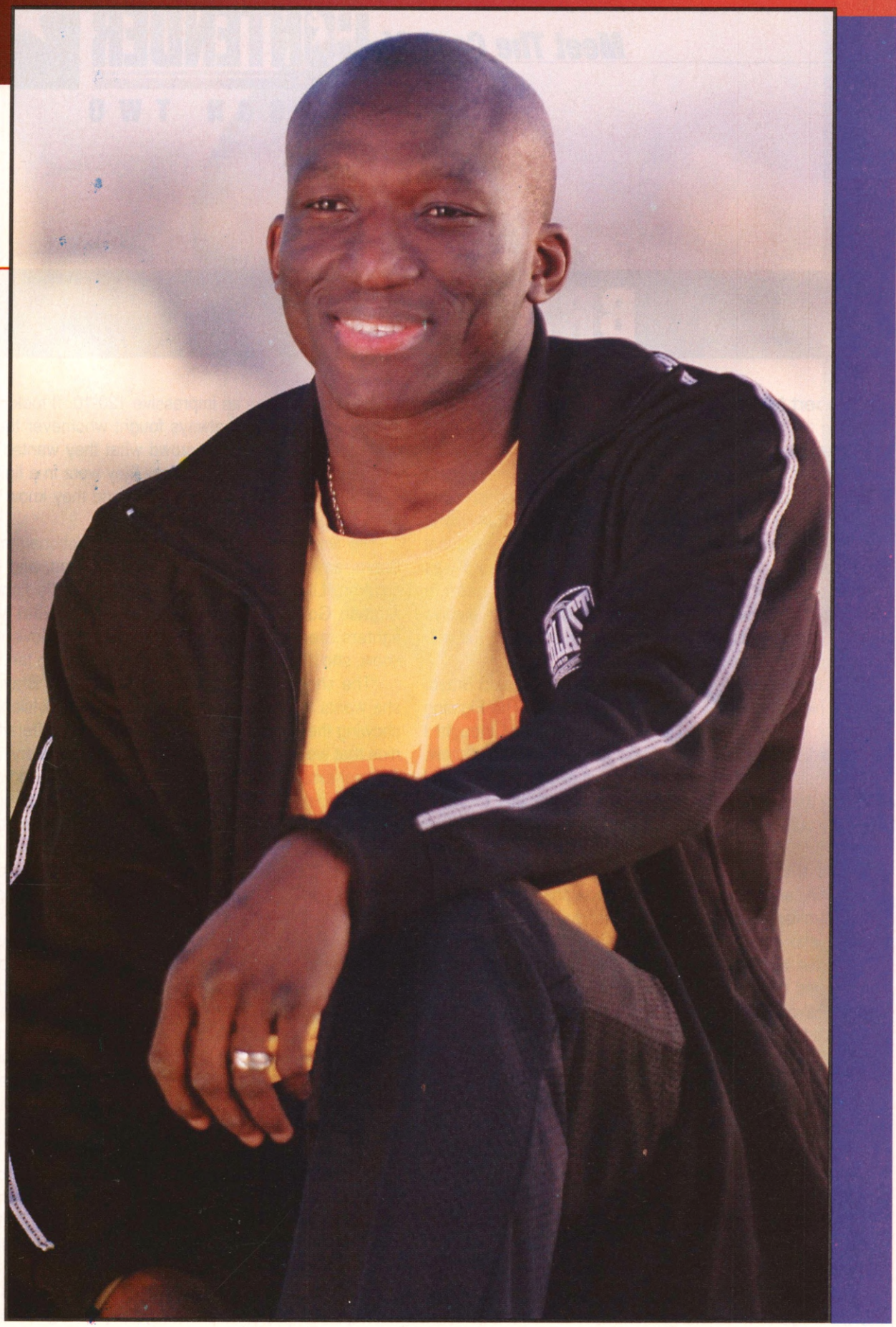
Barrett, who is employed as a fitness trainer and part-time housekeeper, didn't let the opportunity bypass him a second time. He wowed the producers with his innate decency, as well as his slick boxing and rich personal story.

"This is really my opportunity to show my talent, without a manager or matchmaker dictating the moves," said Barrett, who is married to his high school sweetheart, Maria, and has two daughters named Vinece and Vinnio.

"I loved everything about the first show, especially the competition and the family aspect, which was very touching. It was good to see what someone like me goes through every day. It brought tears to my eyes to see other guys going through the same thing."

Of course, Barrett was rooting the hardest for Reid and Cooper. But like so many other viewers, he says he "fell in love" with Alfonso Gomez. "Everyone has a story, but I loved his story and the way he fought," he said.

As far as his own boxing story is concerned, Barrett said the ending has yet to be written. "Being on *The Contender* is everything I have worked so hard for," he said. "I've always fought for pride, as well as for a better life for my family. The show will take me to the next level, and give me the opportunity to make my dreams come true."



NORBERTO BRAVO

By Robert Mladinich

When Norberto Bravo went to the first tryout for *The Contender* at the Doubletree Hotel in his hometown of Tucson, Arizona, he never expected to be picked to move on to the next round in the selection process. Not only was he 34 years old, but he had been toiling as a professional boxer since May 1991, and his 20-10-3 (12) record was modest at best. But the producers must have seen in Bravo, who turned 35 in December, what he has always seen in himself—an unrelenting Mexican spirit and the willingness to fight to the death if necessary.

"My career wasn't going the way I wanted," said Bravo, whose nickname of "El Gallito" translates into The Fighting Rooster. "I wasn't getting the recognition that I thought I deserved, so I figured I would take a chance with the show. At that point, I had nothing to lose and everything to gain. I thought they would look at my age and think that I was on my way out. But that is not the case with me. I'm glad they saw that."

Over the years Bravo, fighting mostly in Arizona, California, and Nevada, has lost decisions to most of the more familiar opponents he had faced. They include Ishe Smith, who competed on the first *Contender* series, and Demetrius Hopkins, whose uncle Bernard is the former undisputed middleweight champion. Both were undefeated when Bravo fought them.

In his last bout prior to being selected for the reality TV show, Bravo battled to a draw with the always durable and resilient Ben Tackie. It was a good outing, considering that Tackie had fought a veritable who's who of top contenders and champions, including Kostya Tszyu, Ricky Hatton, Sharmba Mitchell, and Juan Lazcano.

Although Bravo has incurred 10 losses, he has been stopped only once. That was by Jose Antonio Campo in Inglewood, California, back in 1992. When you consider the fact that Bravo has faced seven unbeaten fighters during his career, his spotty record comes into sharper focus.

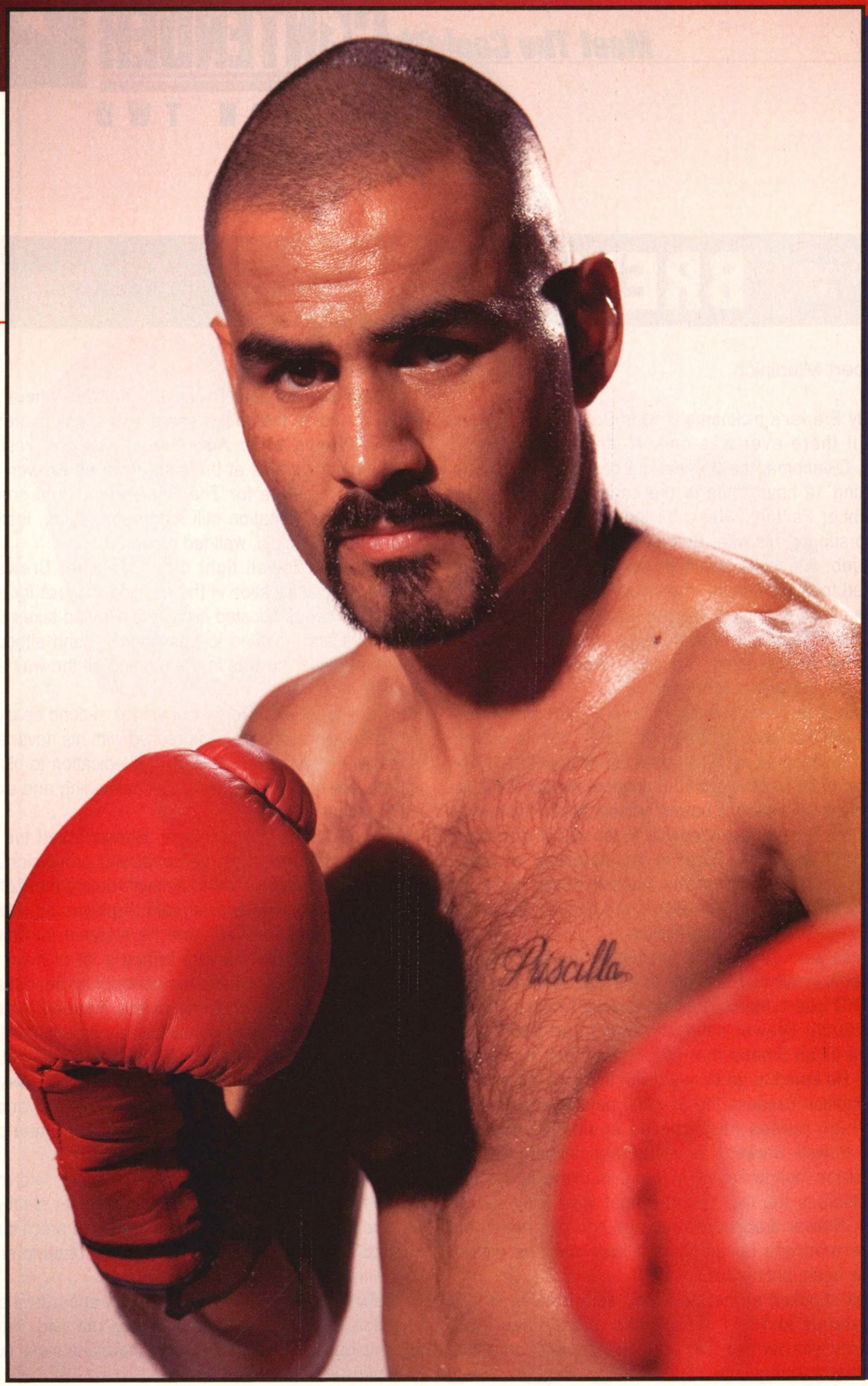
"I thought I beat a lot of the guys I lost to, but I guess all fighters say that," said the extremely candid Bravo, whose amateur record was an impressive 120-10. "I took my losses like a man. I have always fought whomever they gave me, and always gave the crowd what they wanted to see. And everyone that beat me knew they were in a fight. They know how tough and durable I am, and they know that I'm there to fight the whole 10 rounds."

The first *Contender* series had an emotional impact on Bravo, as well as his fiancée, Priscilla Rios, and his four children. Like many viewers, Bravo's favorite fighter was Alfonso Gomez, whom he said "showed what Mexican fighters are all about." Rios not only fell in love with the show, she has since become a fanatical boxing fan.

"The show completely changed her," said Bravo. "Now she wants to watch every fight that's on television. I think showing the family side of boxers made the difference. It is nice that we both like boxing equally now. She and my kids are real excited about me being on the show. And so am I. Everyone is just waiting to see what's going to happen, but we think that good things are going to come out of it."

Bravo has always been a blue-collar warrior in the strongest and most noble sense of the word. He regularly worked second and third jobs to augment his meager boxing income. He currently performs maintenance work at the Honeywell Corporation, where he has been employed for almost three years. Before that he was a plasterer by trade. Going to the gym after a hard day's work is a habit he never gave up, even when his career seemed to be on the fast track to nowhere. Lesser men would have given up, but somewhere deep in his heart, Bravo knew that good things would come his way if he steadfastly refused to relinquish the fistic dreams that he had been nurturing since he was a youngster fighting for nothing more than a sense of personal and ethnic pride.

"I hope this show brings me to where I want to be," said Bravo. "The fans in Tucson have been watching me for a long time. Nobody really knows what's going on now, but once the first show airs, things will blow up. The show will let them know what I'm about, who I am. I've been trying to box my way to the top for a long time. I hope the show, and the support of my fans and family, helps me get there."


Priscilla

GRADY BREWER

By Robert Mladinich

Grady Brewer's nickname is "Bad Boy" or "BB," a misnomer if there ever was one. A lifelong resident of Lawton, Oklahoma, the 35-year-old boxer/puncher works alternating 12-hour shifts at the Lawton Goodyear Tire and Rubber Factory, where he loads tire molds onto a press to support his wife, Brandi, and four children. Prior to that job, which he has held for four years, he was employed for seven years at a local Rent-a-Center. Rock solid and steady in both his personal and professional lives, Brewer refuses to speak badly of his opponents or even of the boxing game, which until now has not given him much in the way of breaks.

Boxing had always been a family tradition for the Brewers. He first laced up the gloves as an 11-year-old and went on to become an Oklahoma State Golden Gloves champion while compiling a 40-5 amateur record. Because Oklahoma is not exactly a boxing hotbed, soon after turning pro in 1999, Brewer was relegated to the role of a traveling opponent. While on the road, he lost decisions to current middleweight champion Jermain Taylor in Miami and Peter Manfredo Jr., who was a finalist in the original *Contender* series, in Mashantucket, Connecticut.

He was also stopped by the highly touted prospect Kelly Pavlik in Wisconsin. Prior to his last bout, an eighth round TKO loss to Marco Antonio Rubio in Odessa, Texas, in May 2005, Brewer says he considered pulling out because of an illness that made it difficult for him to breathe. He opted to go through with the fight in less than peak condition because the $10,000 payday matched the career-high purses he garnered against Taylor and Sechew Powell. Brewer's biggest disappointment was the split decision loss to Powell in Laughlin, Nevada, in June 2004. Besides the fact that the fight was televised on *ShoBox,* Brewer dropped Powell and had him nearly out on more than one occasion. Not receiving the victory broke his heart, but not his spirit.

"I was shocked at the outcome," said Brewer, whose record stands at 18-11 (12). "I had already had a big opportunity with Jermain Taylor and came up short. I was hoping that a victory over Powell would change the direction of my career."

"Grady Brewer beat Sechew in the ring where it mattered, but not in the books where it shouldn't matter," said Internet boxing writer Amy Green, who also resides in Oklahoma and trains at the same gym as Brewer. "BB is an excellent choice for *The Contender.* He is proof that guts and determination still mean something, instead of having a handpicked, well-fed career."

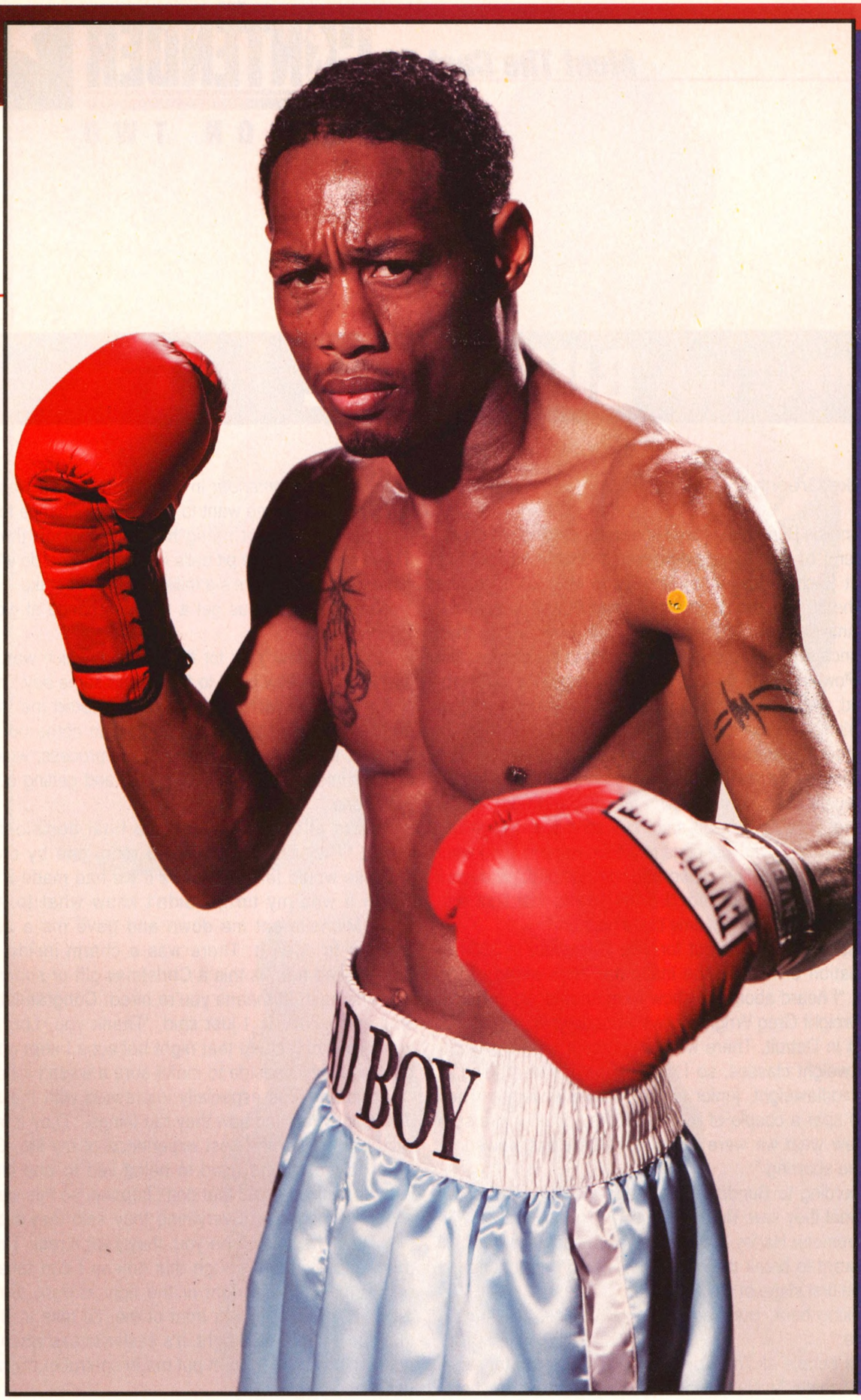
While the Powell fight didn't do what Brewer had wished, his participation in the audition process for the first *Contender* series boosted his spirits. He had taken time off from work and traveled to Los Angeles, and although he wasn't selected, he was in the running all the way up until the final cut.

When he returned to try out for the second season, the producers were obviously impressed with his never-say-die mentality in the ring, as well as his dedication to his family and his ability to juggle two very challenging and exhausting vocations at once.

A huge fan of the first show, Brewer loved the way it touchingly chronicled the personal and professional lives of the participants. He found himself rooting most often for Alfonso Gomez, who Brewer said displayed an inordinate amount of courage every time he stepped into the ring. Brewer believes that he also brings a lot of heart to the show and is thrilled to have the opportunity be in the spotlight and make up for some of the disappointment he experienced at different phases of his career. Just being around Sugar Ray Leonard, whom he had admired greatly when he was a youngster, has proven to be very inspirational to him. After seven years as a pro and after numerous ebbs and flows, Brewer believes that a chance of a lifetime has finally arrived.

Brewer endured one shoulder surgery two months before his latest *Contender* tryout and another shortly after. As much as he worried about the surgeries precluding him from competition, he knew that he couldn't perform at his best without them.

"I always knew that I could be a very successful boxer if I had the time to concentrate on it fully," he said. "I'm going to come out swinging on *The Contender* and make sure the public knows who I am."


D BOY

CORNELIUS BUNDRAGE

By Mike Greenhill

Cornelius Bundrage is best known for coming out on the short end of that famous first-round double knockdown against Sechew Powell on *ShoBox* in May 2005. In that bout, the 30-year-old Detroit native and Powell met in mid-ring immediately after the opening bell. Both landed their first punch simultaneously, sending both to the canvas. But while Powell rose in good shape, Bundrage was still wobbly, and, when the fight resumed, Powell finished him off at the 0:33 mark of the opening round.

"A guy promised me a bonus if I knocked out Powell in one round, and it was more than my purse for the fight, so all I thought about was knocking him out, and I got caught by the punch," Bundrage said. "I wasn't focused at the time; my brother had just gone to jail for murder, and I went into the ring cold. The crowd had me pumped." A devout Christian, Bundrage added, "I didn't go into that fight with Jesus, and that's the last time that'll happen."

Bundrage first tried out for *The Contender* in 2004 in anticipation of making the inaugural 2005 airing of the series. "I heard about the show from another fighter, light heavyweight Greg Wright, so we went down to audition at a hotel in Detroit. There were guys there from many different weight classes, so I didn't know if I was going to fight middleweight, junior middle, or welterweight. They had us spar a couple of rounds so they could make sure we knew what we were doing, then they interviewed us after the sparring."

According to Bundrage, the people at *The Contender* liked what they saw. But he had just signed a contract with local promoter Harley Brown and was unsure what to do. "I didn't want to break the contract," he said, "so I didn't get past the first stage of the audition."

Looking back, Bundrage, 21-1 (13), thinks he made a mistake.

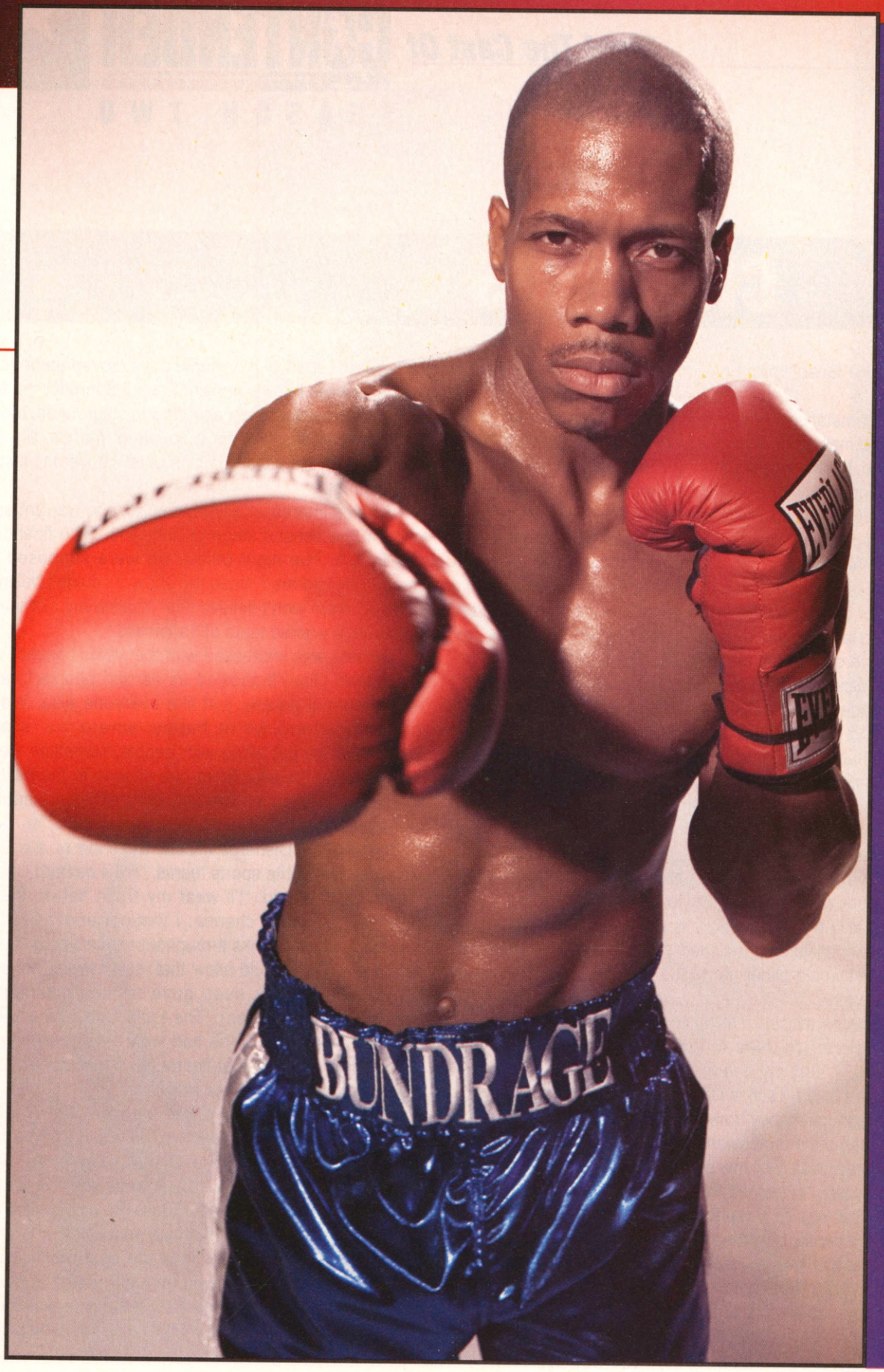
"The people at *The Contender* were nice to me, especially Michelle McNulty, who interviewed me. And when I watched *The Contender* in 2005, I thought it was excellent, and it made me want to get another chance to do it. I was an idiot for not trying harder to get on the show. Those guys were like pit bulls in the ring! You do what you have to do when there's a million dollars at stake

Not too many of us get a second chance at glory, but Bundrage did.

"I flew to New York for the audition, which was just an interview, and flew back to Detroit the same day," he said. "Then Michelle McNulty, who remembered me from the 2005 audition, called me to ask me to come out to Los Angeles for the second stage of the process, which was another interview, meeting the staff, and getting our medicals done."

It was at that point that the final decisions were made. "They brought us into a room one by one, and Michelle would tell each of us if we had made it or not. When it was my turn, I didn't know what to expect. Then Michelle sat me down and gave me a box and told me to open it. There was a charm inside, a dog tag. I asked her, 'Is this a Christmas gift or something?' and she said, 'It means you're hired. Congratulations.' I couldn't believe it. I just said, 'Thank you, Lord, thank you!' I couldn't sleep that night because I kept checking my bag at my bedside to make sure it wasn't a dream."

Bundrage was especially impressed with the staff of *The Contender* and how they ran things. "They treated us real well; it was the best experience of my life. Coming from boxing, you're used to being lied to and cheated, being promised fights that don't happen, so this was such a good experience. Everything they said they'd do they did. They checked up on you, they kept it real. The good thing about going through this now is I can take fights only if the money's right or the fight is right. Before, if anybody stuck a fight in front of me, I'd take it. But now that I've been treated right, it's easier to see when you're not being told the truth. It put me in control of my own situation more."


BUNDRAGE

RUDY CISNEROS

By Mike Greenhill

Circumstances and geography often have a lot to do with the making of a fighter. Rudy Cisneros grew up in the uptown North side of Chicago in an ethnically divided neighborhood where turf wars were part of everyday life. "We lived right on the border of three different gangs—Hispanic, black, and Asian," he said. "I used to play basketball and baseball at a local park that was in the black gang's territory and used to get hassled by them. Then I'd also get beat up by the Asian gang. It was tough. I decided I had to learn how to defend myself."

Cisneros was not the first child in the family to learn the Sweet Science. "My younger brother, George, started boxing at age five. I was nine at the time he brought me to the gym and showed me how to box by beating me up in the ring. Then, Alan Leavitt and Robert Kraak, two trainers at the gym, started coaching me."

Besides being handy with his fists, the 25-year-old Cisneros had a good head on his shoulders, and thus had options. "I won a regional Golden Gloves for Ohio, Michigan, and Illinois with my current trainer, George Hernandez, and then went to the 2004 Olympic Trials. While at the Olympic Boxing training camp at Northern Michigan University, I studied architecture. I set a goal for myself: I would either get to the Olympics or get a bachelor's degree."

Cisneros missed making the Olympic team and turned professional on June 4, 2004 in order to help pay his tuition. "I had my credits transferred from Northern Michigan to ITT Tech in Chicago," he said. "I was hoping to make enough money from boxing to complete my degree."

From both a professional and academic standpoint, *The Contender* was just the sort of opportunity Cisneros, 8-1 (4), needed. "I watched the first season and liked it. I said, 'Man, that was so close to my weight class, I hope they do another season.'" When the second season did indeed come about, he flew back to the Midwest to audition right after a fight in California.

"They had tryouts at the Hard Rock Hotel in Chicago," he said. "There were around 300 guys at the audition, guys from Illinois, Ohio, Michigan, places like that. All of them were welterweights; some guys moved up or down in weight to meet the welterweight requirement for the tryout. They asked us questions about our backgrounds, then had us do training sessions for a couple of rounds, like hitting the bags and the pads, to make sure we weren't just guys off the street."

Cisneros impressed the staff enough to warrant an invitation to the second stage of auditions. "The final casting was in L.A. The night before we were supposed to go home, they told me I made the show. I couldn't believe it. I said, 'My mom won't believe this.' I called my girlfriend and she cried; she cried tears of happiness."

Cisneros was impressed with the whole concept of *The Contender*. "They'll showed us as real people," he said. "We're normal people, just like everyone else. We have moments where we're happy, where we're angry. Sometimes we get along with people, sometime we don't get along with people. From one second to the next, relationships can change. The only thing different about us is we take punches for a living."

The ebullient Cisneros will use the show as a chance to promote his favorite sports teams. "I'm a diehard Cubs and Bears fan," he said. "I'll wear my Cubs hat on the show whenever I have a chance. I thought about having the Cubs logo on my trunks throughout my career, but I wasn't sure if the Cubs would allow that, so I haven't done it yet. George Hernandez even gave me the nickname, 'El Cacchoro,' which means 'The Little Cub.' When George started training me, all he had were heavyweights. I was his only non-heavyweight fighter, so he would say, 'I have all these big bears and one little cub.'"

So how would Rudy Cisneros rate *The Contender* experience so far? "I give it two thumbs up with a cheesy smile," he said, using one of the many funny sayings he's known for uttering. "They treat you the way they would want to be treated. Sugar Ray is great. I can't believe he listens to me telling him about myself and gives me advice! I think this is the best reality show on television, and I hope to win enough money to complete my degree. You gotta have something to fall back on. Boxing can be taken away from you, but education you can take to your grave."

MICHAEL CLARK

By Robert Mladinich

When Michael Clark, of Columbus, Ohio, journeyed to Pittsburgh for his *Contender* audition, the show's producers had yet to even announce which weight class would be showcased. Clark assumed they would pick between 135 and 154 pounds, and he was comfortable with that. Based on the average age of last year's cast, however, he thought he was too experienced to be chosen.

"I told myself, *What the heck, I have nothing to lose*," said the 32-year-old Clark, a one-time amateur sensation who turned pro in 1993 and has compiled a 35-3 (18) record. "I've been around a long time and more than paid my dues. I was always waiting for a break, but the break never came."

Throughout much of his career, Clark, who is nicknamed "Cold Blood" even though there doesn't appear to be anything cold-blooded about him, worked a second job. For many years, he sold and delivered office furniture to support his three children, Michael, Micah, and Mariel. Unfortunately, there was little consistency to his training or his fighting schedule. Even in the early days of his career, he was lacing them up in cities such as Fort Worth, Auburn Hills, Tempe, Philadelphia, Atlanta, Atlantic City, and New York.

Although he had won no shortage of accolades while compiling a 149-9 amateur record, the big pro win continually eluded him. Artur Grigorian stopped him in five rounds in one alphabet title bout and Sirimongkol Singwangcha also beat him in an alphabet eliminator. Along the way he also lost a 12-round decision to Vivian Harris and won a technical decision over Leavander Johnson when a headbutt rendered Clark unable to continue after the fourth round.

"It was always something or someone," said Clark, who was able beat fellow *Contender* Gary Balletto by 10-round decision. "I'm not making excuses for my losses, but I could never focus totally on my career because I had so many distractions. I had bad management and also went through a messy divorce."

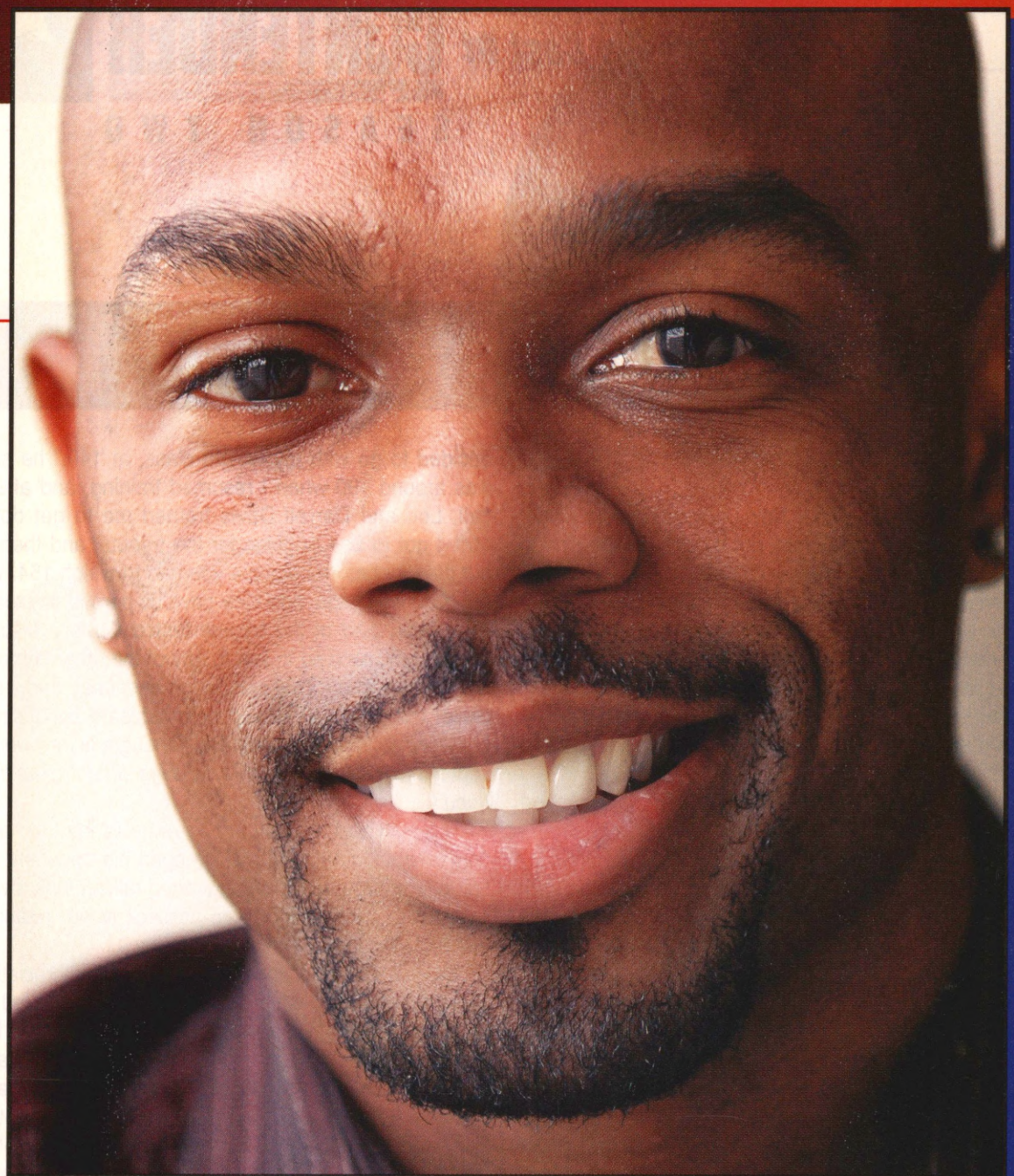
While Clark was certain he had what it took to be a star, he found his career often derailed by problems that were beyond his control. "Boxing brings out the worst in a lot of people," he said. "It's hard to find an honest person in this business. I always believed that I had the boxing ability and the personality to become a star. I'm a person who likes to talk and laugh. In the ring I always liked to have fun. I thought I was very entertaining."

Some fans view Clark as a hot dog, which can translate into star power only if a fighter wins on a consistent basis. Once he absorbed some losses, however, the fans were not so kind. Clark is hoping that his appearance on *The Contender* will help erase any doubts about the skills that some people think may have eroded.

Clark recalls the times he used to spar with Floyd Mayweather to help the current pound-for-pound leader prepare for amateur tournaments. When Mayweather began roaring through the amateur ranks, Clark said that "Pretty Boy" was following in *his* footsteps. Clark also trained for a time with Emanuel Steward and even helped Julio Cesar Chavez prepare for his rematches with Meldrick Taylor and Frankie Randall. Today, that all seems like it was so long ago.

While Clark considers himself a "people person," he is a little unsure what life will be like living with the other contestants. "I will have a tough time," he said. "I'm a happy, joking boxer. You saw on the first show, a lot of those guys had chips on their shoulder and macho attitudes. That's not me. It's hard to be around people who take themselves too seriously. I like to think I get along with anybody, but we'll have to see."

We'll also see if *The Contender* ultimately frees him from having to balance his professional ambitions and need to support his family. "With *The Contender* I can hopefully focus just on boxing," he said. "Boxing has always been my outlet from the ghetto environment that I come from. I've been boxing since I was eight years old, so I avoided a lot of the things the other kids were doing. I never sold drugs or got in big trouble, because I was always training or traveling. Because of boxing, I saw things and went to places I would never see otherwise. Things didn't work so far the way I thought they would. I'm very happy to have this chance, and I plan on making the most of it."



FREDDIE CURIEL

By Mike Greenhill

Growing up in Paterson, New Jersey, Freddie Curiel was not the kind to start a fight, but he was not the kind to back down either.

"My mother switched me back and forth to different schools because I fought so much," the 30-year-old Dominican-American said. "I figured I had to straighten out, so I took up boxing in 1998."

Curiel lived with eight other family members in a two-bedroom apartment. "Times were tight," he said, "but it kept me humble."

And determined. Sometimes, the danger of the sport paled in comparison to the environment in which he lived.

"I started boxing at the Lou Costello Gym in South Paterson," Curiel recalled. "We had to walk to the gym from home, through a rough neighborhood. Guys would look at us the wrong way, but we had to train, so it was a chance we had to take. Eventually, we hooked up with Frankie Toledo's father, who trained us. Omar Sheika, [trainer] Nettles Nasser, and I would walk to Mr. Toledo's house, and he'd then drive us all to the gym."

Curiel's pro career has had stops and starts. "I took a few short-notice fights I wasn't mentally prepared for, so after a few losses I quit," he said. "I took four years off. I opened a seamless gutter cleaning business that was doing okay. When *The Contender* came on last year, my wife would watch it religiously and ask me to 'come see it; there are guys on here who remind me of you. They have families like ours.' But I couldn't bear to watch if I wasn't boxing. But I started having regrets, just like in *On The Waterfront*. I said to myself, 'I coulda been a contender; instead I'm just a gutter man,'" he said and then laughed.

So "Fearless Freddie" resumed training at Square Ring gym in Montville, New Jersey. After a few months, *The Contender* called the gym looking for fighters for the second season. Trainer Lou Esa recommended Curiel, 15-5-2 (6), and he decided to try out. Curiel passed the first round of interviews and then sat back and waited.

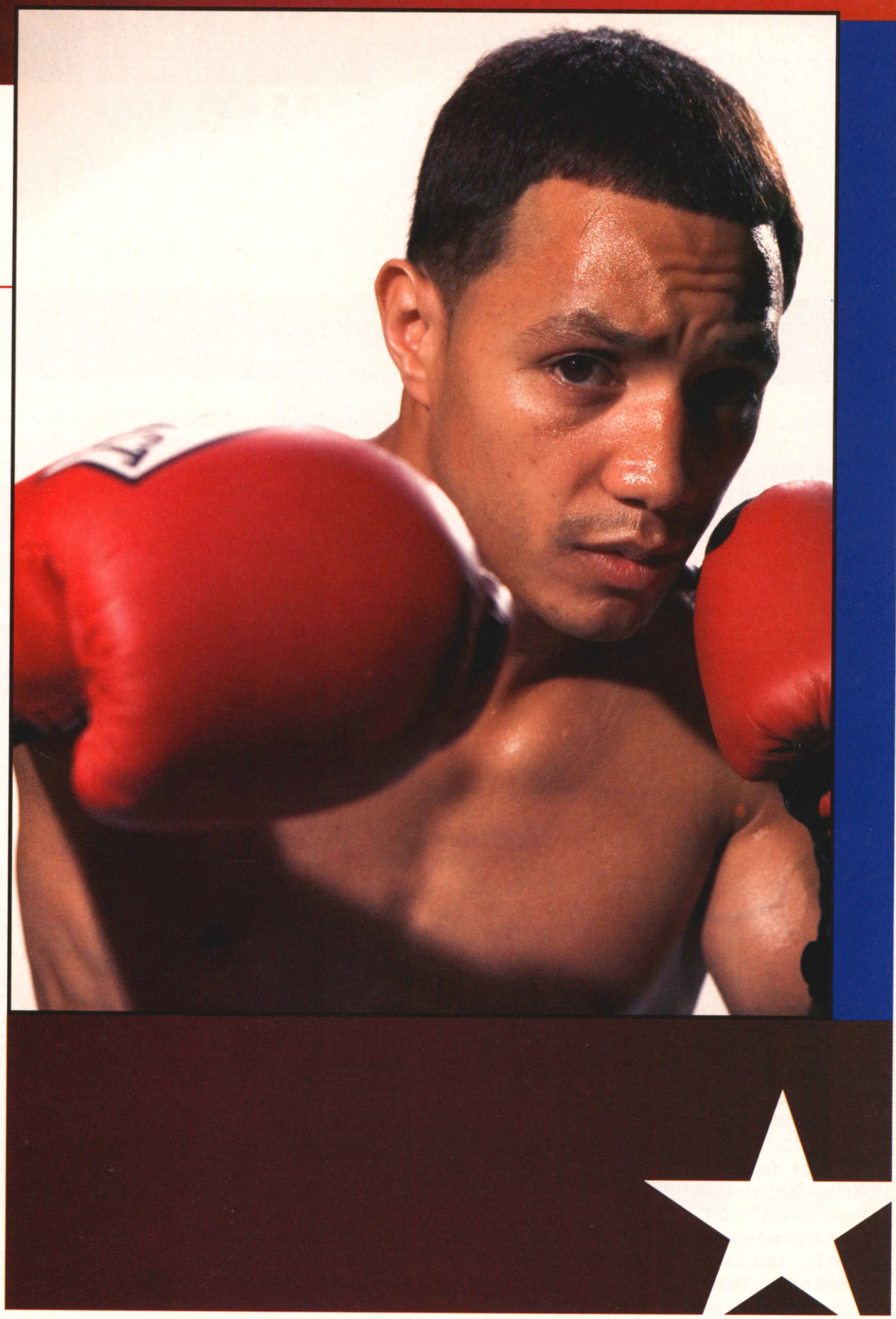
"They called me around Thanksgiving to tell me they decided to go with my weight class, at 149," he said. "I was around 190 when I resumed training, and after that call, Lou and Darrell Davis trained me to get down to 160. I got to Los Angeles for the tryouts, and then dried out the day before because you had to weigh 154. We hit the bags and mitts, and they gave us personality tests."

Another part of the tryouts tested Curiel's discipline. "We weren't allowed to talk to any of the other fighters trying out," he said. "That was tough because I knew a couple of the guys. We would communicate by raising our eyebrows or smiling a little. But I thought it was worth it. I kept thinking, *This is for my kids' lives; if I do good, they do good.*"

The 10th and last day in Los Angeles featured a sparring session in which Curiel dropped his opponent in the first round. "I got excited and started talking junk, I was so happy," he said. "They called us back to our rooms after that and told us to wait for a call."

Those moments alone in the room were excruciating for Curiel and the other *Contender* hopefuls. "I kneeled in my room and prayed to God that I would get picked. I even read that *Dupont Registry* magazine and picked a car I would buy, because I thought I was going all the way," he said. "They finally called me after a few hours. I went down to the room and Michelle McNulty gave me a box. She's in there with the other staff, and she tells me to open it. It was a plaque with diamonds on it and had my name on it. She said I was on the show, and I couldn't believe it. They gave me hugs and told me I was gonna have fun on the show and that they loved me. It was a high that I still haven't come down from."

For Curiel, *The Contender* is the experience of his life. "Not everyone gets a second chance, but I am," he said. "It's great for people to see how we boxers can live under the same roof and still show love for each other, then moments later get in the ring to try and kill each other. That's what's great about boxing: You beat each other down, then, after the final bell, show love for each other. That's true sportsmanship. I just thank God for every day. The world's gonna have something exciting to look at in the future when they see me."



ANDRE EASON

By Robert Cassidy

When Andre Eason is asked why he believes he was chosen to appear on season two of *The Contender*, he doesn't really have an answer.

"I don't know," he said. "Maybe because I keep it real. Maybe because they thought I was funny."

In a sport as physically grueling and emotionally punishing as boxing, Eason said he was always light-hearted with the production crew and staff of the show. But there has been nothing funny or light-hearted about Eason's pro boxing career.

"In boxing, you are really on your own," he said. "On *The Contender*, you really don't know who you are fighting. But that's been happening since my first pro fight. It's not like I was a fighter who people paid for my opponents. I had to fight my way through. People respect that."

Eason grew up in Brooklyn, New York, and often found himself brawling in school and on the streets. Such behavior was the reason why he attended six different public schools. Finally, in 1996, he directed his energy toward boxing. He began training at Gleason's Gym under the tutelage of Yoel Judah and entered the New York City Golden Gloves. He went 8-0 as an amateur and copped the 139-pound sub-novice title. He beat current pro junior middleweight Victor Rosado in the finals.

In the pro ranks, the opposition was always tough. On the way up, not only did Eason fight opponents with winning records, they were often unbeaten. He lost to Freddie Cadena in his third pro fight, but soon established a 12-1 record. Then, in March 2003, he fought Demetrius Hopkins, the nephew of former undisputed middleweight champion Bernard Hopkins. At the time, Demetrius was 11-0-1.

"I found out I was fighting Hopkins the day I went to weigh in," said Eason. "I was supposed to be fighting another fighter. Then he pulled out. A week later, the promoter called me back and said the fight is back on. Then they waited until I got to Delaware at the weigh-in and told me my opponent pulled out again. They pointed out Bernard Hopkins' nephew and asked me if I wanted to fight him. He was tall, and I was training for a smaller fighter. But I was there already, and I don't back down from anybody, so I fought."

Eason, 15-4 (6), lost a majority eight-round decision to Hopkins.

"Even his uncle came over to me and said, 'Good fight.' I don't want to hear that, I want to hear that I won," said Eason.

In his last six fights, Eason has gone 3-3, with the losses all coming against quality prospects. In May 2004, he lost a unanimous 10-round decision to Francisco Bojado and, in his last fight *before The Contender,* he was stopped in the seventh round by unbeaten Juan Urango.

"When I fought Bojado, I was sparring with a lefty," said Eason. "That was the only sparring partner I could find. I didn't have the money to pay for sparring. I never had anything like that."

Eason's reputation for taking tough fights earned him the nickname "Daredevil."

"It's because I do things other fighters won't do," he said, "like going out to spar with Floyd Mayweather before I even had a pro fight. I don't fear anyone, or anything, except God."

On the way up, Eason was inspired by a variety of fighters, including Muhammad Ali, Mike Tyson, and Sugar Ray Leonard. When he turned pro, he said he began to "fall in love" with Felix Trinidad. "You can see a little bit of all of them in my style," he said. "I watch everyone and try to take a little bit from everyone."

Eason, who is 30, still lives in Brooklyn with his girlfriend, Elizabeth Ventura, a model who was recently named New York City's "Miss Dominican Republic." She'll appear briefly on the show.

Like many of the fighters who get the call from *The Contender*, Eason is hoping the exposure will help jumpstart his career.

"This is something new," he said. "I like being around other fighters. I like being around people. Of course, everyone on the show wants to get to the top. I'm not any different."

The only thing he hopes will become different is the road he's able to travel.

"I took the hard way," he said. "I had to take whatever I got. Now, I just hope someone looks out for me."

EBO ELDER

By Robert Cassidy

Just last year, Ebo Elder was on the verge of a world title fight. He was a legitimate contender. So what inspired him to try out for *The Contender*?

"Well, I know the first year of *The Contender* was good for the sport of boxing and good for the fighters on the show," he said. "I thought it would be a good opportunity. You can't beat the exposure. Being with *The Contender* is one of the best things that could ever happen. My dream, my thing, has always been to be a world champion. But financially, I want to give my wife and two daughter lots and lots of opportunities. I'm trying to build a future for them. Plus, there is one big difference between the first season and this season. This season has more top caliber fighters. I think 12 out of the 16 guys are world class. If they are able to focus all of their energy on training, I think 12 out of the 16 guys can win world titles."

Southpaw Elder has come closer to fighting for a world title than most of them. In 2004, Elder upset unbeaten prospect Oscar Diaz via unanimous 10-round decision. But his breakthrough fight was a thrilling 12th-round TKO of fringe contender Courtney Burton on ESPN2's *Friday Night Fights*. Elder was bleeding badly from a cut above his right eye, his face was swollen, but he rallied to drop Burton twice in the final round to earn an exciting victory.

"Fights like that made fans for me," said Elder. "I learned after the Burton fight that when I know my purpose, nothing is going to stop me. I know that God's hand was in that fight, and He has a purpose for me."

After the Burton victory, a title fight with WBA titleholder Juan Diaz was scheduled for April of 2005 at Caesars Palace. Having sparred several times with Diaz, Elder was very confident going into the match. But Diaz pulled out of the fight.

"I think Juan knows and his people know that he can't beat me," said Elder. "I think he just wanted out of the fight. He claimed he had a cut. Someone told me he didn't have a cut. I think he's a chump, to be honest. He's not a real champion. A real champ will fight anyone, anytime."

In an attempt to force Diaz' hand, Elder accepted a title-elimination bout against fellow contender Lavka Sim, who had already lost a decision to Diaz. But in September '05, Elder suffered a 12th-round knockout against Sim and hasn't fought since. His record stands at 22-2 (14).

"Sim still never got the fight with Diaz, and I doubt I would have," said Elder.

As with many fighters on *The Contender*, an interesting storyline helps, and Elder, 27, has one.

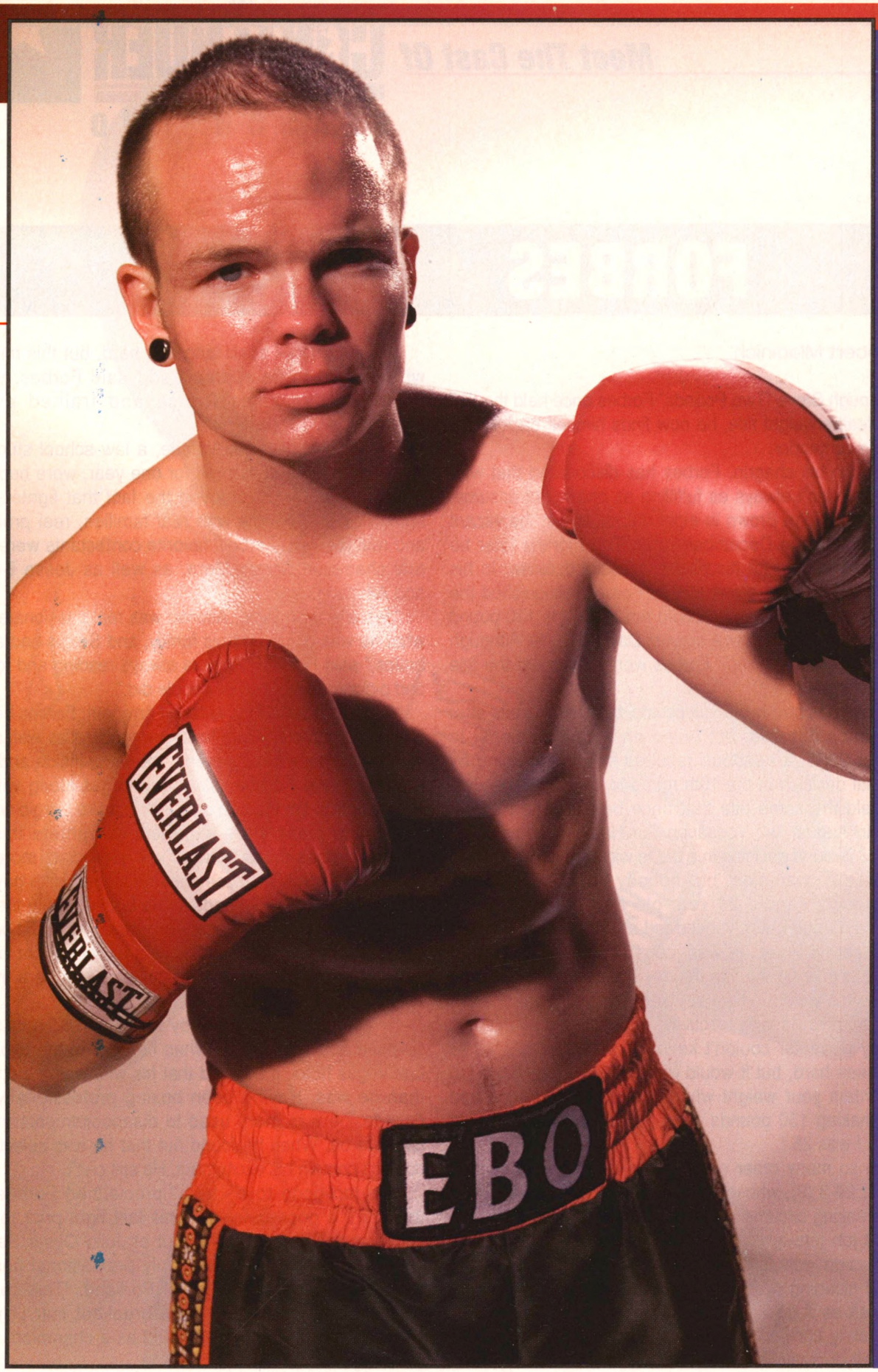
He was born in Atlanta and lives with his family in Newnan, Georgia. Thus, he brings a southern-charm element to contrast the urban stereotype most people associate with boxing. He and his wife, Amy, have two daughters, Mattie, 5, and Abbie, 2. This is the second time they've been married. The couple married right out of high school at the age of 18, but Elder admits to giving into temptation and blames himself for the divorce. Since then, Elder has dedicated himself to God and is a born-again Christian.

At the time of his birth, it seemed that Elder would never come close to a boxing ring. Most infants are born with "soft spots" on their head, which allows the skull to grow as the child grows. But when Elder was born, his skull bones were already fused. He endured several dangerous surgeries, which included removing pieces of the skull. Doctors told his parents that he would never be able to participate in contact sports.

But Elder's father, Greg, was determined to make a fighter out of his son. He had gloves on Ebo at the age of two and launched his amateur career at the age of eight. Greg trained his son through much of the fighter's pro career, but, like many father-son tandems in boxing, they had a falling-out before the scheduled Diaz fight and have parted ways.

That's a storyline that will likely be explored on the series.

"It's a little strange not going through this experience with him," said Elder of his father. "That's a part of me that is still incomplete."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STEVE FORBES

By Robert Mladinich

Although Steve "Two Pounds" Forbes once held the IBF super featherweight title, he now finds himself back in the role of a contender.

Much to his chagrin, Forbes has discovered that winning a title isn't always as fulfilling as one might assume. He stopped John Brown in eight rounds to win the vacant alphabet strap in December 2000. Ten months later he beat Brown again for his only successful defense. In his second defense, 11 months later, Forbes relinquished the title at the scales when he could not make the 130-pound division limit for a defense against David Santos. Although the fight went ahead and Forbes won a decision, the title was declared vacant.

Forbes has had two unsuccessful bids to win belts after the Santos debacle, but failed on both occasions. In October 2003, a headbutt resulted in Forbes losing by technical decision in the 10th round to Carlos Hernandez, who held the same title that once belonged to Forbes. Then, in August '04, Yodsanan Sor Nanthachai also beat him by 12-round decision in a bid to win the WBA belt.

"I was a champion, but nobody knew it," said the refreshingly candid 29-year-old Forbes, a native of Portland, Oregon, who moved to Las Vegas to further his boxing career when he was just 19. "Believe it or not, I wanted to give up the title the day I won it. It was so hard to make the weight. I take the blame for not making it, but it had a lot to do with inactivity. I was very disappointed that my promoter couldn't keep me busier. It still would have been hard, but it would have been easier. It is hard to maintain your weight when you're not fighting. I had been making 130 pounds since I was 14. When I fought Santos I was 25."

Like so many other cast members of *The Contender,* Forbes, 29-3 (9), whose nickname was spawned after the heartbreaking circumstances of the Santos fight, worked a second job throughout much of his career. He did some construction work and, for a while, owned his own commercial cleaning company. Even during his title reign, he often felt as if he was just moonlighting as a boxer. He desperately craved to be busier and to get a high-profile, financially lucrative bout. But none of that materialized.

"The road has been long and hard, but this might be what I need to be appreciated," said Forbes, who is managed by James Prince and trained by Jeff Mayweather.

Forbes and his wife, Valerie, a law school student to whom he has been married for one year, were huge fans of the first show. Both loved the fact that fighters were shown as real people with real families, real problems, and real feelings. Forbes' favorite contestants were eventual champion Sergio Mora, as well as Jesse Brinkley and Alfonso Gomez.

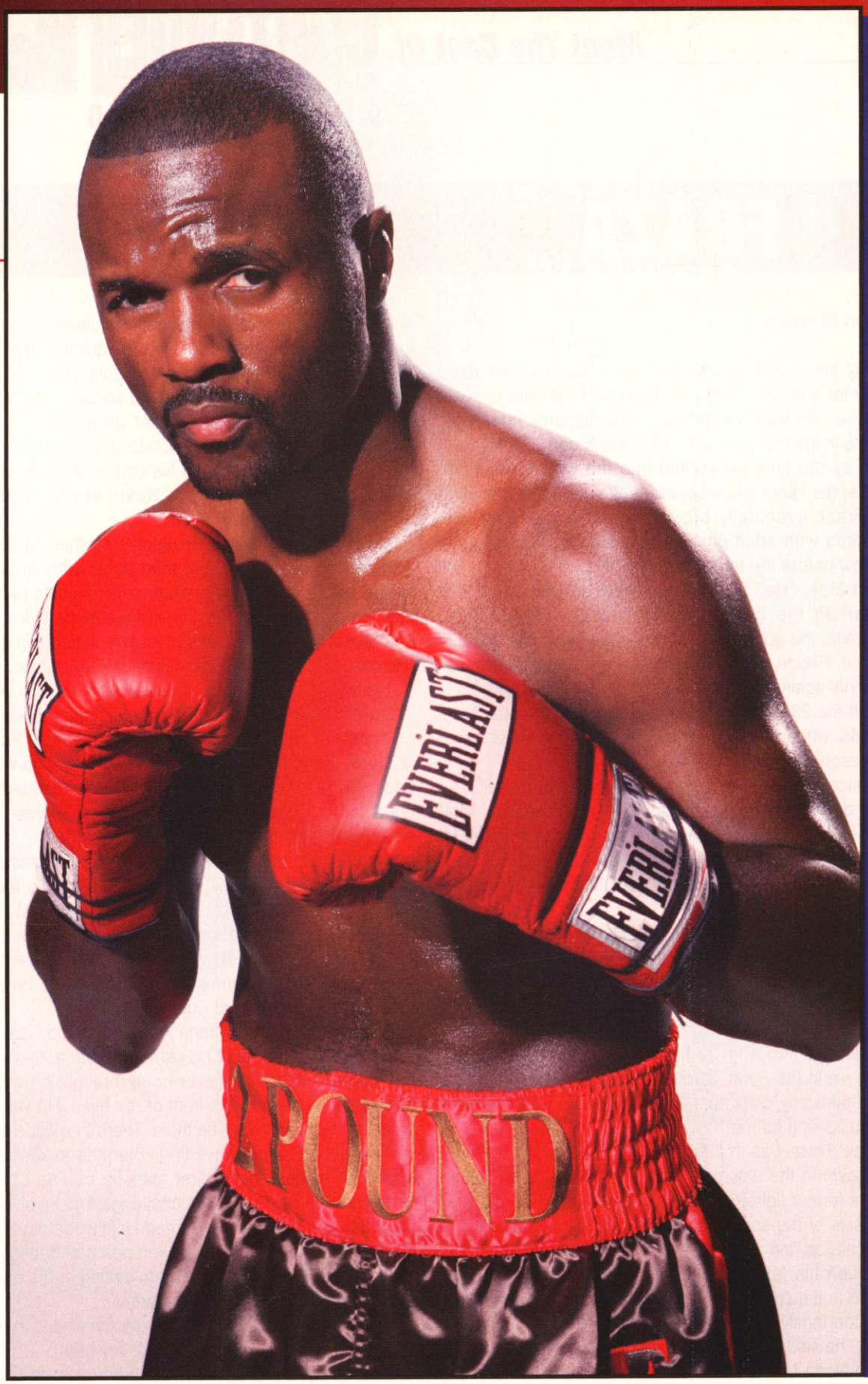
"Jesse was a comic, Alfonso was real passionate about what he was doing and his family, and Sergio had a lot of brains," said Forbes. "He was always reading and focused and picking up what other people did."

Without sounding the least bit arrogant, Forbes believes he most resembles Mora for those reasons as well as others. "I consider myself a pretty smart guy inside and out of the ring," said Forbes. "I'm easy to get along with and avoid conflict. I'm there to do a job, just like Sergio was."

With so many more experienced fighters this time around, Forbes thinks viewers will appreciate more tactical fights. "I think we'll see chess matches, with guys getting into each other's heads in the house and in the ring," he said. "That's good because people don't just want to see slugging with no science. It's important for people, especially new fans, to see that boxing can be a thinking man's game."

Forbes still seems awed by the fact that he was even selected as a participant. When he went to the tryout at a Las Vegas hotel, it seemed that his wife was more thrilled than he was. Having been boxing professionally for a decade, he was more used to disappointments than he cared to be. When he found out that he was selected, he couldn't contain his excitement. He still can't.

"It's too good to be true," proclaimed Forbes, who thinks it's a good omen that his last fight prior to being chosen, a third-round knockout of Julio Cesar Sanchez in November 2005, was his only professional bout that took place in his hometown of Portland. "This could be just what I need to become a breakout star. The first time around, I wasn't appreciated as a champion. I hope to change that this time around."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JEFF FRAZA

By Don Stewart

Gritty junior welterweight Jeff Fraza spent seven years fighting for a break. It appeared that he finally got one last year when he was one of the 16 participants chosen to compete in the first season of *The Contender*.

But by the time he walked into the gym for the first episode, the Haverhill, Massachusetts, native was feeling sick. Fraza eventually broke out into a rash and was diagnosed with adult chicken pox, forcing him to leave the show before the fourth episode.

Last May, "Hell Raza" came back to outpoint Brent Cooper on the undercard of *The Contender* final. Meanwhile, the guy who was voted back onto the show in his place, Rhode Island's Peter Manfredo, went all the way to the final against Sergio Mora.

It left the 28-year-old wondering about what could have been. So, when offered a chance to be on the show's second season, he didn't hesitate.

"Basically, I wanted to go back to redeem myself," he said. "I didn't get a chance to fight on the first season. That was one of the biggest disappointments I've had in my life. It was a big opportunity to fight in front of the world. I went back as a fan favorite. That was great, but I wanted to fight in the tournament."

The smallest competitor among last season's crew, the 5'8" Fraza had to add several meals to get up to the qualifying weight of 154 pounds. It was a familiar role. Back in grade school, the undersized Fraza often found himself a target of bigger bullies.

"I just got into a lot of fights," he said. "I wasn't the biggest kid in the world. So if I was pushed, I pushed back. I didn't take any crap from anybody. Somehow, it always came to fighting for me."

When Fraza was in fifth grade, his father, Norm Fraza, built a gym in the attic of a barn next to the family home. Norm, a former fighter, taught Jeff and older brother Derek the basics of the sport in that hot, dusty environment that Jeff recalls as "old school."

Though his father, grandfather, and brother were all involved in the sport, Jeff said he wasn't pushed into carrying on the family tradition. "I never had really any pressure to fight," he said. "I just enjoyed fighting."

With Norm as his trainer, Fraza turned pro back in April of 1998 with a first-round stoppage of James Johnson. He lost a six-round decision to Tyrone Jackson the following year, then dropped an eight-round split decision to Andre Baker in November 2001. After that setback, Norm stepped aside as trainer. His son hasn't lost since.

Under the direction of Dick Ecklund, Fraza bounced back with the best performance of his career at the time, a one-sided 10-round victory over Kevin Watts for the New England 140-pound title.

Fraza went on to help Ecklund's brother, Micky Ward, prepare for his second and third fights with Arturo Gatti. Fraza, who has suffered through several stints of inactivity due to injuries and promotional squabbles, twice had his ribs broken by Ward, costing him two scheduled paydays. "He cost me another 10 grand himself," Fraza said.

He laughs about it now. The two developed a bond that led to Ward taking over for Ecklund as head trainer.

"I feel I need to work hard to get his respect," Fraza said of Ward. "When I'm around him, I know I need to work hard because he's a warrior. I trained with him through all the Gatti fights, and I knew right then that I wasn't doing enough. It's just been a great fit."

Joe Calnan assists Ward, while Norm remains onboard as his son's manager. Another member of the team, Jay Jalbert, remains in Fraza's corner in spirit. Last January, shortly after the filming for the first season, Jalbert died at age 81 after a long battle with cancer. Jalbert spent his last weeks on a bed in Norm's living room, where he watched his Patriots win their third Super Bowl.

"We kept him as comfortable as we could," said Fraza, who dedicated the rest of his career to Jalbert. "It was one of the toughest things I've ever gone through in my life. I've never seen anyone die in front of my eyes. He was always there for me. He'll always be there. There's no doubt about it."

Fraza, 17-2(10), always finds the guts to keep battling. That was evident in the first episode of *The Contender*, when he took part in a team challenge that involved carrying logs up a hill near the famed Hollywood sign. Despite great pain in his legs (the chicken pox had developed into shingles) and his friend Manfredo yelling in his ear, Fraza persevered through the competition.

"I ain't no quitter," he said. "I ain't never quit in my life. I think that's what carried me on, was my heart."

Now he's just hoping for some luck to go with it.

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MICHAEL STEWART

By Jack McCaffery

As a union bricklayer by day, and by night one who lays out professional boxers, Michael "No Joke" Stewart never goes to work without the proper tools to maximize his craft. Into one pocket, he will stuff a pointing trowel and a tingle plate. In the other, there will always be room for boxing tickets.

Boxing is forever a sport in which certain guys sell; Stewart is among the best at taking that challenge literally. So it is hardly a coincidence that wherever he fights particularly close to his home in New Castle, Delaware, there is a crowd of supporters not only cheering, but waving signs, blowing into noisemakers, stomping their feet, and clapping in rhythm. After all, he'd sold those people their tickets, quite often at various job sites, even as the cement was setting.

"Is fan support important?" Stewart asked. "Well, it is really important to me. It isn't a boxing match if there isn't anybody there to watch it. If you have people there to support it, then it is a boxing match. If there is nobody in the stands, then what type of fight do you have? I have a heck of a following, a lot of support. I have a lot of friends. Hey, look, I am not in boxing for the money, because I still work a full-time job. I am always going to work, and I am always going to be involved in boxing. But I do this because I love it, and the fans like it too."

The fans enjoy the connection to the fighter, but even more, they enjoy the fighter's connection to an opponent's jaw. Eventually, there must be one to ensure the other, and Stewart, 38-4-2 (22), more often than not, makes good on that violent end of the deal. He was undefeated (with two draws) through his first 30 fights, won the USBA light welterweight title, and went to England to fight Ricky Hatton, losing by TKO in round five.

But at 28, he still has time to be a contender—and now, too, a *Contender*.

"I wanted to be a part of the show in the first year, but my uncle died, and it was bad timing for me," Stewart said. "So when they called me back this year, I looked at it like a door in my life that I might not have the chance to walk through again. I looked at it as a chance to show people what I could do, and to show them what kind of person I am."

He's a heavy puncher, as suggested by his nine-to-five craft. He's a showman, as suggested by his willingness to carnival-bark people into to the arena. And he is a worker. Said Hall of Fame promoter J Russell Peltz: "You can't keep him out of the gym."

Stewart, a married father of two daughters, Britney and Jasmine (Jazzy), with wife Lisa, craves ring success for the usual reasons, the money, the fame, the satisfaction. But he also wants it for pride—pride in his roots. Born in Columbia, Tennessee, Stewart wears white trunks with a light orange trim. That is a tribute to the University of Tennessee Volunteers athletic teams, but it is more.

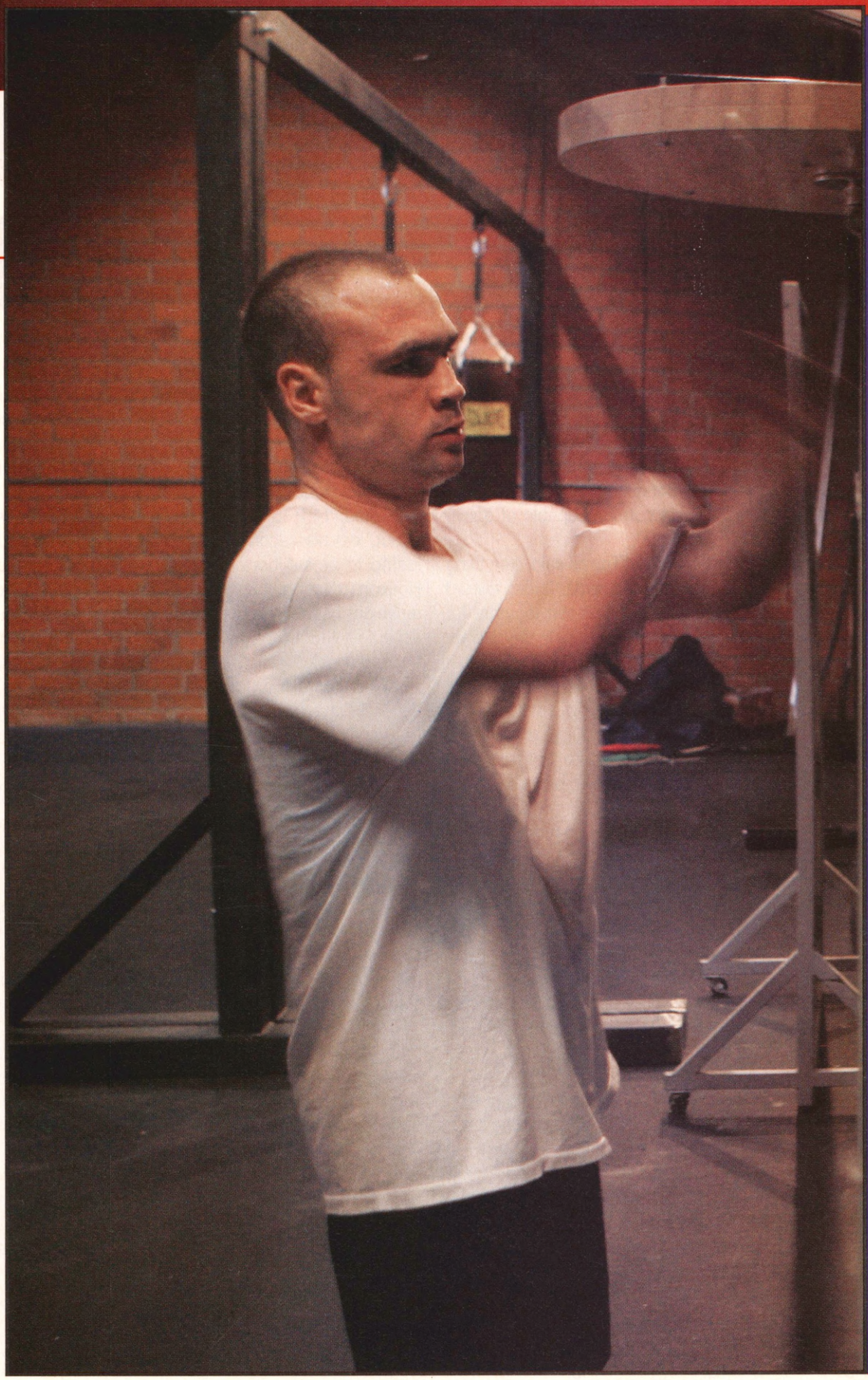
"I'm half Italian and half Scottish," he said. "And the Scottish people are the greatest people in the world. My full name is Michael Richardson Stewart, and orange and white are in my family crest. My grandmother's name was Buchanan. I've seen some fights of Ken Buchanan, one of the toughest guys in the world. And Mary the Queen of Scots was a Stewart.

"My mother, though, is Italian, and I am proud of that too. All my cousins are still there. They come from a place called Lettamanopello. Do you know whose ancestors come from there? Jay Leno, Rocky Marciano, Madonna, and John Gotti."

If he is distantly related to former lightweight champion Buchanan and Marciano, it shows. Boxing is not only in his blood, but also in the blood of older brother Richard Stewart, a professional cruiserweight beginning to attract attention. But even if the lineage is a bit perforated, it makes for a good show, and, in boxing, there is always a connection. This much is certain: Michael Richardson Stewart is No Joke, a nickname lopped on him by his manager, Keith Stoffer. And when it comes to attracting fans, he has an edge on many more-famous fighters.

"You get a lot of these fighters—world champs—that can't even sell out a 1,000-seat venue. But I am going to sell you out every time I fight."

That's because he always has all the right tools.



AARON TORRES

By Jack McCaffery

Through a 13-fight winning streak, Aaron Torres enjoyed success, survived pain, and moved ever deliberately to the brink of boxing success.

Marriage, he learned, was not quite that simple.

No, there never has been a cutman capable of quick-healing the heart.

"Of all that has happened to me," Torres said, "the thing that really changed my life was my divorce. It was toward the end of last year. Jessica and I had been together for 10 years, and I am only 27. But we were only married for about six months. She was like everything to me. But that made me grow up quick. It made me become a man. I am a lot stronger now. At first, I was weak. Now, I am strong."

There are no scorecards in such struggles, only the unfortunate results and the way they are handled. For Torres—once a self-diagnosed "hyperactive" child who used boxing as an exhaust pipe for his aggression—he found a more peaceful solution to the challenge of handling the emotional struggle: poetry.

In a sport long recognized as much for its art as for its brutality, such a varied set of interests has precedent. Didn't a certain Muhammad Ali enjoy a good iambic pentameter as much as he did the old one-two? But the difference between boxing poetry such as "The Thrilla In Manila" and what Torres pens is simple: He only writes about sadness.

Anything else?

"No," he said. "Just about heartbreak. Nothing else." Nothing? "Nothing." Why? "A lot of it has to do with getting your heart broken. It's about being creative, about stepping outside yourself. When I write poetry, I write what comes to my mind and comes to my heart. And what pours out, pours out."

The inability to keep anything inside has long been Torres' problem, but in another way: That's why his father, Gus, took him to boxing gyms in Philadelphia—and found that his son had a heart for boxing, long before it was ever broken.

"When I was growing up, I was a troubled kid," Torres said. "I got into a lot of fights in school. I guess I was one of those who would be called a 'problem child.' My father said, 'We've got to do something with this energy. Let's go to a boxing gym.' When I first got there, the trainers all said, 'Wow, it looks like he has talent and ability.' I have been in it ever since. Boxing, though, is not easy. It has its ups and downs."

Torres, 14-2 (6), turned professional in 2000, won his debut, lost his second fight, then won his next 13 before losing to Luis Alberto Santiago at Philly's famed Blue Horizon in the battle for the Pennsylvania State junior welterweight belt. Along the way, he earned and, to a point, accepted, the nickname "Two-Guns," a tribute to his two-handed attack.

"That name has followed me because I have quick hands," Torres said. "But I don't carry that name anymore. I like my name the way it is—just Aaron Torres, that's all. Most people respect my wishes."

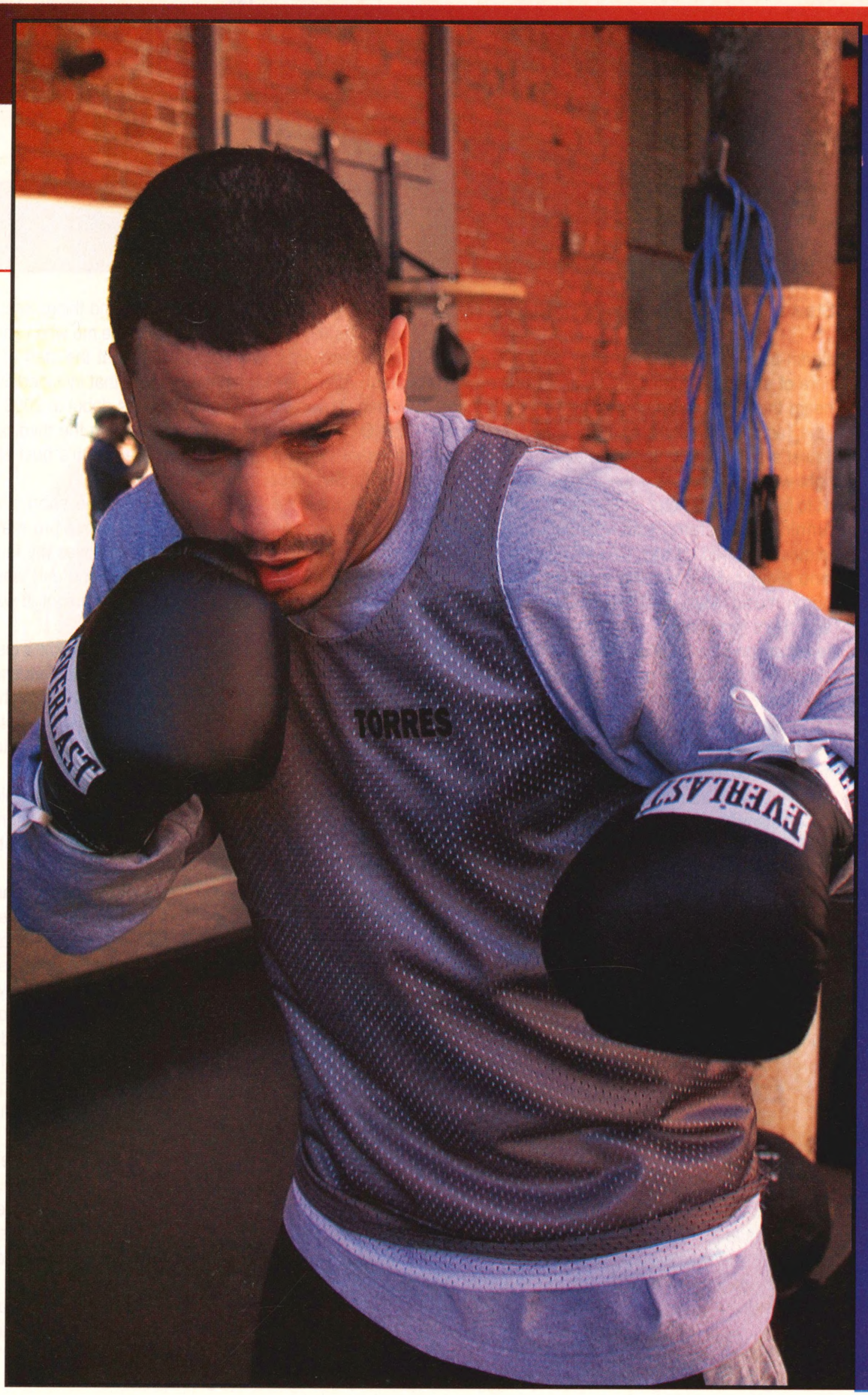
Now, if anything, fans can call him a Contender, capital "C" ... and that does project a certain poetry.

"I was happy when I got the call for the show," Torres said. "When I first heard about it, I thought, *is this something I really want to do?* I knew it wouldn't be easy. But I said yes because I thought it would be fun and exciting—fame and fortune and so forth. And, with my personality and talent, I thought I would have a great chance to get on the show. I knew it would take some sacrifice. But it is something I really wanted to do."

So he will take his swings and risk some lumps, aware that life brings both—and that the next opportunity is always a touched-glove away. That's why he spent two years at the Community College of Philadelphia and has a post-boxing career planned in real estate.

"Right now, I am a full-time boxer," Torres said. "Boxing is what I am good at. It is what I do. Some day, I want to be in real estate. One reason: money. That's where the money is. And there will be a time for that. But after being involved in boxing for 17 years, I am glad that I still have my wits about me. I am still fresh. And I don't have any scars—any scars to my body."

As for the heart, that will take some healing, one rhyme at a time.


TORRES
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WALTER WRIGHT

By Don Stewart

The seldom-used piano in Brian Halquist's home had become more of a piece of furniture than an instrument. So when he heard the music spilling out of his living room one afternoon, the Tacoma promoter was momentarily confused.

To Halquist's surprise, junior middleweight prospect Walter Wright was softly pressing the keys, his young son, Trivon, next to him on the bench.

"I go running downstairs, and Walter's playing the piano," Halquist recalled. "I say, 'You're kidding, he's a boxing piano player!' He's playing classical music; he's playing church music. Man, I just wish people could see who Walter is. He's incredible."

With the exception of a hardscrabble upbringing, Wright, 10-1 (5), doesn't fit the profile of a stereotypical fighter. It starts with his native city, the boxing mecca of Seattle.

When we think of The Emerald City, things like rain, grunge music, coffee shops, more rain, and Matt Hasselbeck probably come to mind. But boxing? Outside of Eddie Cotton, Greg Haugen, and legendary trainer George Chemeres, Seattle hasn't produced many known commodities in the sport.

Wright, 25, said he was the only kid in his high school who boxed. "To this day, throughout the city, I'm 'the boxer guy,'" he said with a laugh. "People don't even know me. They just know me as the guy who boxes. Who thinks of Seattle as a fight city? A lot of guys treated me differently on *The Contender* because of that."

Like a lot of fighters, Wright came from a broken home and a tough neighborhood. His father was sent away to prison in Arkansas when Wright was three, and he says he's never had a close relationship with his mother. At 13, he moved in with an uncle, Timothy Smith, who became a father figure.

Three years later, Wright went to Arkansas to visit his father, who was due to be released. The visit didn't go well. Still, not long after that, Wright's father popped up in Washington looking for a place to stay. He lived with Wright and his uncle for three months.

Wright, who was working at McDonald's and fighting in amateur tournaments at the time, came home one day to an empty house. His father was gone. As an added bonus, he took anything of value Wright owned. Shortly thereafter, his father was back in prison. Wright never got his stuff back. Not surprisingly, the two don't speak anymore.

"I'm still smiling about it," Wright said. "If he'd have been in my life, I wouldn't have been a boxer and things would have been different. Him not being there made me who I am."

That resiliency was put to the test at the start of his pro career. After a stellar amateur career that included five state Golden Gloves titles, Wright made his debut in 2003 against Matt O'Brien. Comfortably ahead early in the third, an overconfident Wright walked into the Canadian's best shot and was stopped 33 seconds into the round.

"It showed me the seriousness of the sport," he said. "From jumping into an amateur match to a pro match, the vibe of it is totally different. I took it as it was my fault that I lost. The guy wasn't nowhere near as good as I was. I was winning the fight, and he caught me with a shot. It was a big wake-up call for me."

Wright bounced back, reeling off 10 straight wins before landing a spot on the second season of *The Contender*. His most impressive performance came last May, when he dominated previously unbeaten Darnell Boone en route to an eight-round unanimous decision on ESPN2. Wright took that fight on 10 days notice.

Light heavyweight Kenny Ellis came up with the nickname "Two-Guns" to describe his stablemate. It's a reference to Wright's two-fisted power, though his speed, smooth skills, and elusive style might make "Winky" a better fit.

After four pro fights with Haugen as his manager and trainer, the independent-minded Wright reunited with former trainer Mathis Hill and began managing himself. He signed a promotional deal with Halquist last spring. "They want a percent to talk for me," Wright said of managers. "I can do that myself."

Articulate and charismatic, Wright feels a responsibility to be an entertainer in the ring. (In between rounds of the Boone fight, he made Superman poses for Trivon.) Exposure has been a problem, though. Ten of his 11 fights have been at the Emerald Queen Casino in Tacoma, while the other was in Seattle.

Halquist and Wright see *The Contender* as the perfect showcase for the fighter's ability and personality. Wright tried out for the first season, but was told he needed more fights. Halquist had him in the ring seven times last year, so when Wright tried out for season two, the promoter had a good feeling.

"We're really excited about it," Halquist said. "It's a vehicle where people can watch Walter fight, but also it's a vehicle where he's gonna get out there in a different way. It's weird, but we just knew he was gonna be on that show."

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BACK ISSUES OF KO

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Aug. 1983: Michael Spinks: King Of The Light Heavyweights ... But The Glory Can't Erase The Sadness. Color Pinup: Johnny Bumphus. Interview: Jones & Rappaport. Also: Jones-McCrory, Pryor-Arguello II preview, world's best fighter poll, Jeff Chandler, Mark Breland, Leon Spinks.

Oct. 1983: Is Larry Holmes Finished? Color Pinup: Greg Page. Interview: Marvis Frazier. Also: Marvin Hagler, Bobby Chacon, Jack Dempsey.

July 1984: Donald Curry: "I'm Better Under Pressure." Color Pinup: Gerrie Coetzee. Interview: Curry. Also: Pipino Cuevas, John Mugabi, Bill Costello, M. Spinks-Davis.

Aug. 1984: WBC Heavyweight Champion Terrible Tim Witherspoon: A Superstar Of Tomorrow? Color Pinup: Rocky Lockridge. Interview: Sugar Ray Leonard. Also: Marvin Hagler, Gomez-LaPorte.

Oct. 1984: Golden Boy Mark Breland: Can He Be The Next Sugar Ray? Color Pinup: Jaime Garza. Interview: Aaron Pryor. Also: Bramble-Mancini, Sugar Ray Leonard.

Nov. 1984: Thomas Hearns: "Hagler Is Shakin' Like A Leaf On A Tree!" Color Pinup: Tim Witherspoon. Interview: Livingstone Bramble. Also: Rosario-Davis, Marlon Starling.

Feb. 1985: Gerry Cooney: How Far Can He Go This Time? Color Pinup: Michael Spinks. Interview: Ray Mancini. Also: Dream fights, Hector Camacho.

March 1985: Next For Marvelous Marvin Hagler: The Only Fight That Really Matters. Color Pinup: Mike McCallum. Interview: Thomas Hearns. Also: Santos-Medal, Meza-Garza, Holmes-Bonecrusher.

May 1985: Thomas Hearns: *KO* Fighter Of The Year. Color Pinup: Gerry Cooney. Also: Camacho-Ramirez, Truth Williams, Year In Review.

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Oct. 1985: Still Champ After All These Years: Larry Holmes—A Legend Continues To Grow. Interview: Mark Breland. Also: Michael Spinks, Milton McCrory, Wilfredo Gomez.

Nov. 1985: McGuigan! The Pluck Of The Irish. Also: Julio Cesar Chavez, Thomas-Weaver, Donald Curry, featherweights.

Dec. 1985: Pinklon Thomas: "Larry Holmes Betrayed Boxing." Color Pinup: Hagler-Mugabi. Also: Mike McCallum, Tyrell Biggs, Camacho-Ramirez.

Jan. 1986: Macho Mania! Hector Camacho Takes Aim At 10 Tough Targets. Color Pinup: Jimmy Paul. Interview: Alexis Arguello. Also: Truth Williams, Curry-McCrory.

Feb. 1986: King Michael: How Long Will He Rule The Heavyweights? Also: Barry McGuigan, Shawn O'Sullivan, Spinks-Holmes, *Rocky IV,* world's best fighter poll.

Oct. 1986: They're Back!!! The Cooney Circus Returns. Interview: Sugar Ray Leonard. Also: Jimmy Paul, Mike Tyson, Donald Curry.

Dec. 1986: Larry Holmes' Message To Mike Tyson: "Show Me You Can Kick My Butt!" Color pinup: Mark Breland. Interview: Holmes. Also: Witherspoon-Bruno, Evander Holyfield, Cruz-McGuigan, Danny Lopez.

Feb. 1987: Upset Of The Decade: Has Honeyghan Cut Short The Curry Era? Color Pinup: Marvin Johnson. Interview: Bobby Czyz. Also: Edwin Rosario, Hector Camacho.

June 1987: New WBA Welterweight Champion Mark Breland: He's Got A Lot To Smile About. Interview: Marvin Hagler. Color Pinup: Greg Haugen. Also: Michael Olajide, Carlos Monzon.

Oct. 1987: Greatness Beckons: When Will Mike Tyson Answer The Call? Color Pinup: Michael Olajide. Interview: Tyrell Biggs. Also: Paz-Haugen, Marvin Hagler.

Nov. 1987: Michael Spinks: The War With Tyson Is Okay With Him. Color Pinup: Vinny Pazienza. Interview: Frankie Duarte. Also: Matthew Hilton, Hagler-Czyz.

Dec. 1987: Mike Tyson: Undisputed Heavyweight King—But Is He Losing His Loyal Subjects? Color Pinup: Matthew Hilton. Interview: Barry McGuigan. Also: Aaron Pryor, Mike McCallum.

Jan. 1988: The Collapse Of A Hero: Why Breland Never Hit The Mark Of Greatness. Color Pinup: Michael Spinks. Interview: Aaron Pryor. Also: Michael Nunn, Alexis Arguello, lightweights.

Feb. 1988: Pazienza & Haugen Go For Each Other's Throats. Color Pinup: Marlon Starling. Interview: Bob Arum. Also: Tate-Olajide, ESPN Boxing.

July 1988: Superfight History Dictates: Don't Expect The Expected From Tyson-Spinks. Color Pinup: Roger Mayweather. Interview: Dr. Ferdie Pacheco. Also: Roberto Duran, Azumah Nelson, Barkley-Olajide.

Aug. 1988: Tyson-Spinks: *KO's* Fearless Forecast Of Superfight '88. Color Pinup: Buddy McGirt. Interview: Matthew Hilton. Also: Lockridge-Knight, Evander Holyfield, Lloyd Honeyghan.

Sept. 1988: Tyson-Spinks, The Aftermath—What If Tyson Wins; What If Spinks Wins? Color Pinup: Frank Tate. Interview: Marlon Starling. Also: Barry McGuigan, Simon Brown, risk-taking.

Oct. 1988: Middleweight Terrorism: Iran Bombs The Hit Man. Color Pinup: Don Lalonde. Interview: Frank Bruno. Also: Roger Mayweather, Marvin Hagler.

Dec. 1988: Sugar Ray's Comeback: Why? Color Pinup: Simon Brown. Interview: Kevin Rooney. Also: Michael Nunn, best fighter poll, welterweight wars.

Jan. 1989: The Troubled Times Of Mike Tyson. Color Pinup: Lloyd Honeyghan. Interview: Gil Clancy. Also: Meldrick Taylor, Jeff Fenech, Boxing's Champs.

Aug. 1989: Special 100th Issue. Color Pinup: Hagler vs. Hearns. Also: The *KO* Years, 50 most influential people, '80s ratings, best of *KO* Interview, year-by-year review, Sugar Ray Robinson.

Sept. 1989: "I Beat Up Tyson Before, I'll Do It Again," by Carl Williams. Color Pinup: Michael Nunn. Also: Chavez-Mayweather, Brian Mitchell, Marv Albert.

Feb. 1990: George Foreman Risks A Multimillion-Dollar Shot At Tyson. Color Pinup: Brian Mitchell. Interview: Riddick Bowe. Also: Simon Brown, Molina-Lopez, East vs. West.

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July 1990: *KO* Interview—Sugar Ray Leonard. Color Pinup: Jorge Paez. Also: Michael Nunn, Buster Douglas, Jibaro Perez, the Olympians.

Aug. 1990: Meldrick Taylor: Brilliance In Defeat. Color Pinup: Buster Douglas. Interview: Teddy Atlas. Also: Buddy McGirt, Dokes-Ruddock, Simon Brown.

Sept. 1990: *KO* Interview—Buster Douglas. Color Pinup: Macho Camacho. Also: Thomas Hearns, Nigel Benn, Greg Haugen, Boxing Hall of Fame.

Oct. 1990: Send In The Clown: Is Jorge Paez A Phenom Or A Fraud? Color Pinup: Paul Banke. Interview: Tony Lopez. Also: Chavez-Taylor II, Jesse Benavides.

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Dec. 1990: The Heart Of The Matter: Who Will Survive The Holyfield-Douglas War? Color Pinup: Terry Norris. Interview: Virgil Hill. Also: Michael Carbajal, Ruelas Brothers, best fighter poll.

Jan. 1991: Macho Ado About Nothing? Why Hector Camacho Wants To Be Believed. Color Pinup: Meldrick Taylor. Interview: Irving Rudd. Also: Sugar Ray Leonard, Orlando Canizales, Vinny Pazienza.

Feb. 1991: 10 Fighters To Fear: Boxing's Most Destructive Hitters. Color Pinup: Razor Ruddock. Interview: Ray Mercer. Also: Roberto Duran, Saoul Mamby, Mills Lane, Sugar Ray Robinson.

May 1991: Ruddock Eyes The Big Upset Of Tyson. Color Pinup: Luisito Espinosa. Interview: Jeff Fenech. Also: Virgil Hill, Pernell Whitaker, Alex Ramos, Simon Brown, Buddy McGirt.

June 1991: Exclusive *KO* Interview: Evander Holyfield. Color Pinup: Raul Perez. Also: Norris-Leonard, Charles Williams, champs of 1971 vs. 1991, J.C. Chavez.

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Dec. 1991: Tyson vs. Holyfield—The Experts Analyze The Elements That Will Decide The Fight. Color Pinup: Joey Gamache. Also: Michael Moorer, Pernell Whitaker, Greg Richardson, Robert Quiroga.

Jan. 1992: The Tyson-Holyfield Showdown: An Exclusive Forecast By George Foreman. Color Pinup: Myung Woo Yuh. Also: Fenech-Nelson, TV announcers, boxing's toughest men, Toney-McCallum.

March 1992: *KO* Interview Mike Tyson: An In-Depth, Toe-To-Toe Talk With Boxing's Biggest Star. Color Pinup: Michael Moorer. Also: Thomas Hearns, Tracy Patterson, Larry Holmes, best fighter poll.

May 1992: Division-By-Division Faceoffs: The Best Of '92 vs. The Best Of '67. Color Pinup: James Warring. Interview: Hector Camacho. Also: Tommy Morrison, Bert Cooper, Gianfranco Rosi.

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Sept. 1992: Can Tommy Morrison Punch Out The Theory ... White Men Can't Fight. Color Pinup: Welcome Ncita. Interview: Ken Norton. Also: Reggie Johnson, Jimmy Paul, McGirt-Blocker, Ali-Shavers.

Oct. 1992: The Olympics: Golden Memories ... And Golden Futures? Color Pinup: Reggie Johnson. Interview: Bobby Czyz. Also: Genaro Hernandez, Terry Norris.

Nov. 1992: Foreman vs. Holmes: The Fight Evander Holyfield Should Have Prevented. Color Pinup: Iran Barkley. Interview: Joey Gamache. Also: Hector Camacho, Tracy Patterson, Rudy Zavala.

Dec. 1992: The Final Four: Ruddock vs. Lewis, Holyfield vs. Bowe. Color Pinup: Genaro Hernandez. Interview: Lennox Lewis. Also: Whitaker-Pineda, Bowe-Coetzer, Alex Stewart, Gamache-Lopez.

Jan. 1993: Holyfield vs. Bowe: Who Will Win And Why. Color Pinup: Al Cole. Interview: Vinny Pazienza. Also: James Toney, Terrence Alli, Maurice Blocker.

Feb. 1993: Strictly Business: George Foreman Fights For The Love Of It—The Money! Color Pinup: Vinny Pazienza. Interview: George Benton. Also: Tracy Spann, Oba Carr, greatest eras.

March 1993: Not Just Another English Muffin: Lennox Lewis Powers His Way Toward The Title. Color Pinup: Leeonzer Barber. Interview: Emanuel Steward. Also: Reggie Johnson, Lopez-Gamache, USA Network.

May 1993: Recapping The Future: Julio Cesar Chavez' Road To 100-0. Color Pinup: Terry Norris. Interview: Junior Jones. Also: Buddy McGirt, Riddick Bowe, Raul Marquez.

Dec. 1993: The *KO* Feud Rages On: "I Will Torture You!" Says Riddick Bowe To Lennox Lewis. Color Pinup: Kennedy McKinney. Also: Mississippi boxing, George Foreman, Yori Boy Campas , Carbajal-Kim, Morrison-Moorer.

June 1995: The Tug-Of-War Over Mike Tyson. Color Pinup: Wilfredo Vasquez. Interview: Oliver McCall. Also: Alejandro Gonzalez, Alexis Arguello, Kostya Tszyu.

Sept. 1996: Tyson vs. Seldon. Don't Bet On This Fight Until You've Read This Story! Color Pinup: Arturo Gatti. Interview: Butterbean. Also: Dana Rosenblatt, '92 Olympians, McGuigan-Pedroza.

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Floyd PATTERSON

1935–2006

Patterson as he looked in his prime as heavyweight champion of the world (left) and many years later, riding in the International Boxing Hall of Fame parade in Canastota, New York (right). Patterson was inducted into the IBHOF in 1991.

"He Had The Compassion Of A Priest"

PHOTO BY PAT ORR

By Don Stradley

Floyd Patterson's funeral was a private affair. The fighter who had met presidents and royalty was buried during a simple service that included only his immediate family and a few friends.

"That's how he would have wanted it," said Brian Burke, a close friend who had trained as an amateur under Patterson's guidance. Barely able to control the emotion in his voice when discussing Patterson's battle with Alzheimer's disease and cancer, Burke said, "He was a tremendous person, in and out of the ring. He loved his family. There were times when I'd fight, we'd barely rip the tape off my hands, and he'd be rushing home to be with his wife and daughters. He was crazy about those girls." Regarding Patterson's wife, Janet, Burke said, "They adored each other. She stayed by his side the whole time because he was very ill."

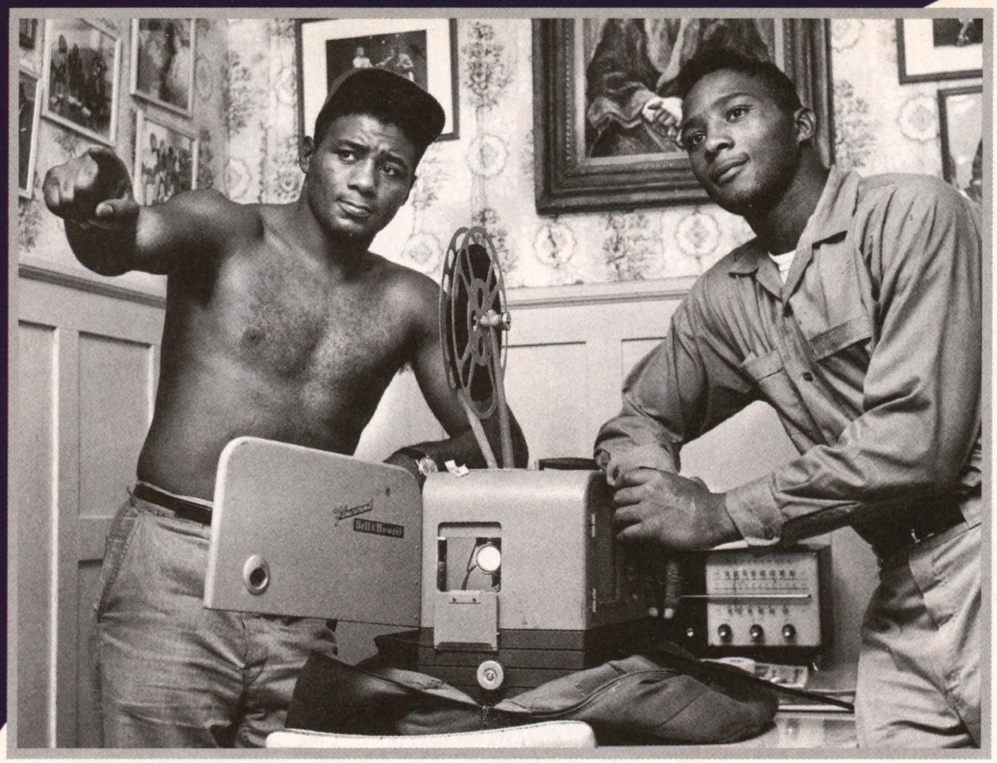
"My father was completely unselfish," said Patterson's daughter Jennifer. "Right up until the end, he was so consumed with everyone else, concerned about my mother and the kids, wondering how we'd get along without him. And even though he had Alzheimer's, he still had moments where he was lucid; he knew what was going on."

The last time many of us saw Patterson was in 1998 when clips of a videotaped deposition were aired on television. Showing the early signs of Alzheimer's, he struggled to answer questions. It was painful to watch, and it resulted in Patterson resigning from his post as New York State Athletic Commission Chairman.

"People overreacted to the deposition," said ESPN's Brian Kenny. "I was with Floyd at a charity benefit just a year earlier, and he'd forget little things, but he was still very sharp."

The deposition and subsequent retirement were embarrassing, but there was a silver lining: Patterson was finally out of the spotlight.

He'd never enjoyed being the center of attention. After winning the middleweight gold



Floyd and his younger brother, Ray, review the film of Patterson's first fight with Ingemar Johansson, looking for chinks in the Swede's defense. Floyd was so shy, he sometimes told people he was Ray to avoid attention.

Patterson and his manager-mentor Cus D'Amato talk things over at training camp. Although they split up later, by the time Patterson was 30 years old, D'Amato had helped him earn $10-million in purse money. D'Amato tried to prevent Patterson from fighting Sonny Liston.

medal at the 1952 Helsinki Olympics, Patterson was asked to speak at a banquet; he nearly passed out from anxiety. The first time someone asked for his autograph, he was so nervous that he misspelled his name. For much of his career, when someone asked, 'Are you Floyd Patterson?" he'd say, "No, I'm his brother, Ray." Floyd would sometimes sign autographs as "Ray Patterson," just to keep up the charade.

"He got better as he was older," said Jennifer. "He could give a little speech or something, but he was never entirely comfortable in front of people."

But along with Patterson's shyness was an extraordinary compassion. In 1956, Patterson kayoed Archie Moore for the heavyweight championship vacated by Rocky Marciano, becoming the youngest man in history to win that title. He was 21; the record would stand for 30 years. But rather than enjoy the moment, Patterson felt sorry for Moore. Patterson also felt uncomfortable during his victory parade, as he couldn't stand so many people staring at him, waving, watching his every move.

When Patterson recalled his Brooklyn upbringing, he talked about the many afternoons he'd spent looking for a place to hide. A petty thief and poor student, he was sent to Wiltwyck, a school for emotionally disturbed boys. Like many wayward youths, he found boxing. Cus D'Amato, the same man who later molded Mike Tyson, mentored him.

Patterson was small for a heavyweight, but his leaping left hook was breathtaking and his hands were lightning fast. His peek-a-boo style became part of the boxing lexicon. His fights were rarely dull. His second fight with Ingemar Johansson was THE RING's 1960 Fight of the Year, and his battle with George Chuvalo, won on points by Patterson, was given the same distinction in 1965. Still, Patterson was too shy to look up when he spoke to reporters. And in Patterson's era, boxing was attracting

more than just sportswriters.

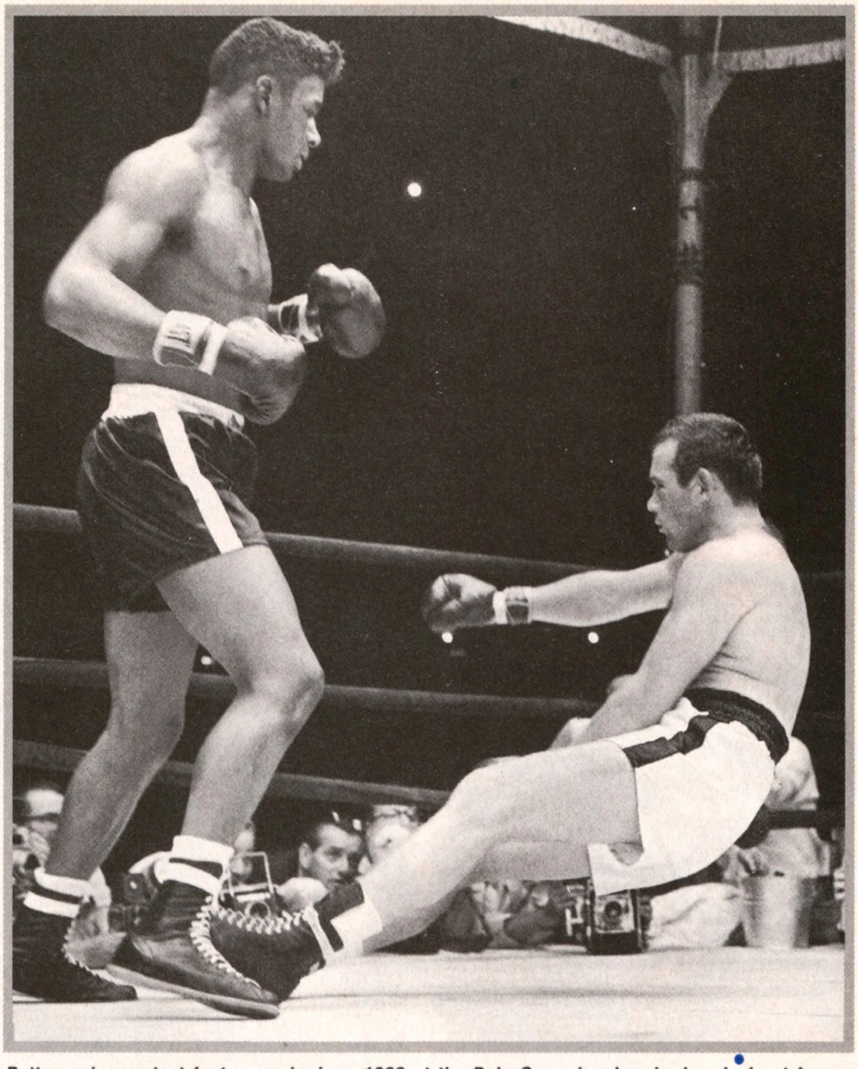
The "new journalism" of the time included writers like Norman Mailer, George Plimpton, and Gay Talese, and sophisticated new magazines like *Playboy*, *Esquire*, and *Sports Illustrated*. Patterson was scrutinized like no heavyweight champion before him. Surprisingly, Patterson opened up to these writers, as if he, too, was curious about his inner workings.

Here's Patterson in an *Esquire* piece by Talese on being knocked out: "It is not a bad feeling when you're knocked out. It's a good feeling, actually. It's not painful, just a sharp grogginess. You don't see angels or stars; you're on a pleasant cloud. After [Sonny] Liston hit me in Nevada, I felt, for about four or five seconds, that everybody in the arena was actually in the ring with me, circled around me like a family, and you feel warmth toward all of the people in the arena. You feel lovable to all the people. And you want to reach out and kiss everybody—men and women—and after the Liston fight, somebody told me I actually blew a kiss to the crowd from the ring.

"But then this good feeling leaves you ... and all you want then is a hatch door in the middle of the ring—a hatch door that will open and let you fall through and land in your dressing room instead of having to get out of the ring and face those people.

"I often wonder what other fighters feel, and what goes through their minds when they lose. I've wanted so much to talk to another fighter about all this, to compare thoughts, to see if he feels some of the same things I've felt. But who can you talk to? Most fighters don't talk much, anyway."

Patterson's neurotic side overwhelmed him at times. He bought a false beard and dark glasses to wear in case he lost a fight, and admitted that he sometimes felt cowardly. There was also a growing rift with D'Amato, who had become an overprotective father figure. An example of Patterson's breaking away from D'Amato involved the manager's dread of flying. Patterson bought a single-engine Cessna and learned how to fly it. But D'Amato had helped Patterson earn nearly $10-million by the time he was 30, and "the reason Patterson earned so much money was because D'Amato never took a dime," said Kenny. Patterson later regretted leaving D'Amato, and they eventually reconciled to some degree.



Patterson's greatest feat came in June 1960 at the Polo Grounds when he knocked out former conqueror Johansson to become the first man to regain the heavyweight title. Later, the sensitive Patterson said, "I just hope that I'll never be as vicious again."

After losing the championship to Johansson, Patterson went into seclusion. But after visiting a children's hospital, Patterson was moved by the bravery of the little patients. "I thought, *Who am I to feel sorry for myself? All I did was lose a fight*," said Patterson.

Patterson did his training for the Johansson rematch in an abandoned roadhouse in Connecticut. Between sparring and running, he'd kill time by shooting rodents with a .22 rifle. The seedy conditions were perfect for honing himself psychologically. He won the rematch by destroying the Swede in five rounds, becoming the first fighter to regain the heavyweight championship. Even more impressive was the way Patterson defeated a man who had so totally dominated him a year earlier. It would be his most glorious ring achievement, but the fight itself disturbed him. "I just hope that I'll never be as vicious again," he said. After knocking Johansson cold, he helped carry the loser to his corner.

Patterson's popularity exploded after beating Johansson. They fought a rubber match in Miami, with Patterson winning in front of 15,532 people. His autobiography was published. He was honored, feted, and admired around the world. The only dark cloud on the horizon was Sonny Liston, the number-one contender. D'Amato had tried to keep Liston away from Patterson, but the inevitable was near. "The millions of letters I received, they made Liston a bad guy and I was a good guy. I don't ever want to endure that

kind of pressure again," said Patterson.

Liston kayoed Patterson in one round. Ten months later, he did it again. Patterson was devastated publicly and personally. "In the second fight," he said, "I was going to get out there and prove that I can fight him his way, hardheaded, you know, and I walked right into it." Patterson once said he would fight Liston a third time, but in a secluded spot with no one watching, just so he could see if he could last three minutes. It was around this time that Patterson married Janet and purchased a 17-acre farm in the Hudson Valley. It seemed the perfect place to hide.

Muhammad Ali stopped Patterson in 1965, but it was a brave effort, as Floyd was fighting with a slipped disc that made movement impossible. In 1967, he lost a controversial decision to WBA heavyweight titleholder Jimmy Ellis. The loss was such a robbery that it turned public opinion back in Patterson's favor. At a Madison Square Garden retirement gala for Ray Robinson, Patterson was introduced at ringside along with retired boxing legends Jack Dempsey and Gene Tunney. The ovation for Patterson was the loudest by far. Inactive for two years, he returned at age 35 and enjoyed his new popularity. In 1972, after a nine-fight win streak, Patterson lost a rematch with Ali and never fought again.

"He had plenty of heart," said Teddy Atlas. "Everybody talks about his chin and how many times he's been on the floor. People should be talking about how many times he got up."

Patterson "had the compassion of a priest," wrote W.C. Heinz. "And I never knew anyone else in sports whose antennae were so attuned to the suffering of others."

As Jennifer told THE RING, "My father literally wouldn't hurt a fly. He would spend 10 minutes chasing a fly or a moth to catch it and let it out of the house."

"I saw him forgive people who had done him wrong," said Burke. "That's just how he was. He'd take a guy down on his luck and buy him dinner."

Volumes could be filled with Patterson's humanitarian efforts, but it was as a resident of New Paltz that Patterson bloomed. He gave Holy Communion at The St. Joseph Church, did his shopping at the local ShopRite, and visited nursing homes. The most telling sign of Patterson's growth as a human being was when he began using the farm he bought as a sanctuary as a way to reach out to people.

After reading an article about the growing drug culture in New Paltz, Patterson converted his barn into The Huguenot Boxing Club. "If you give a youngster something to do that he enjoys, he won't hang around on corners," Patterson said. An orphan named Tracy Harris began lingering at Patterson's home. Patterson, who had four children with his first wife and two with Janet, adopted Tracy Harris two years later. In 1992, Tracy Harris Patterson, with his father working his corner, won the WBC super bantamweight title.

Floyd and Tracy had some difficulties later, but prior to Patterson's death "they made their peace," according to Jennifer. "My father loved working with kids," she said Jennifer, "especially boys who had the same self-esteem problems he had. He'd help them find some pride." Tracy has continued the legacy and is now training fighters.

Floyd Patterson's ring record, 55-8-1 (40), had enough drama for two careers.

Patterson, surrounded by young admirers during a tour of Sweden, never refused to sign an autograph and always thanked the fan afterward. This humble attitude was a hallmark of Floyd's personality.

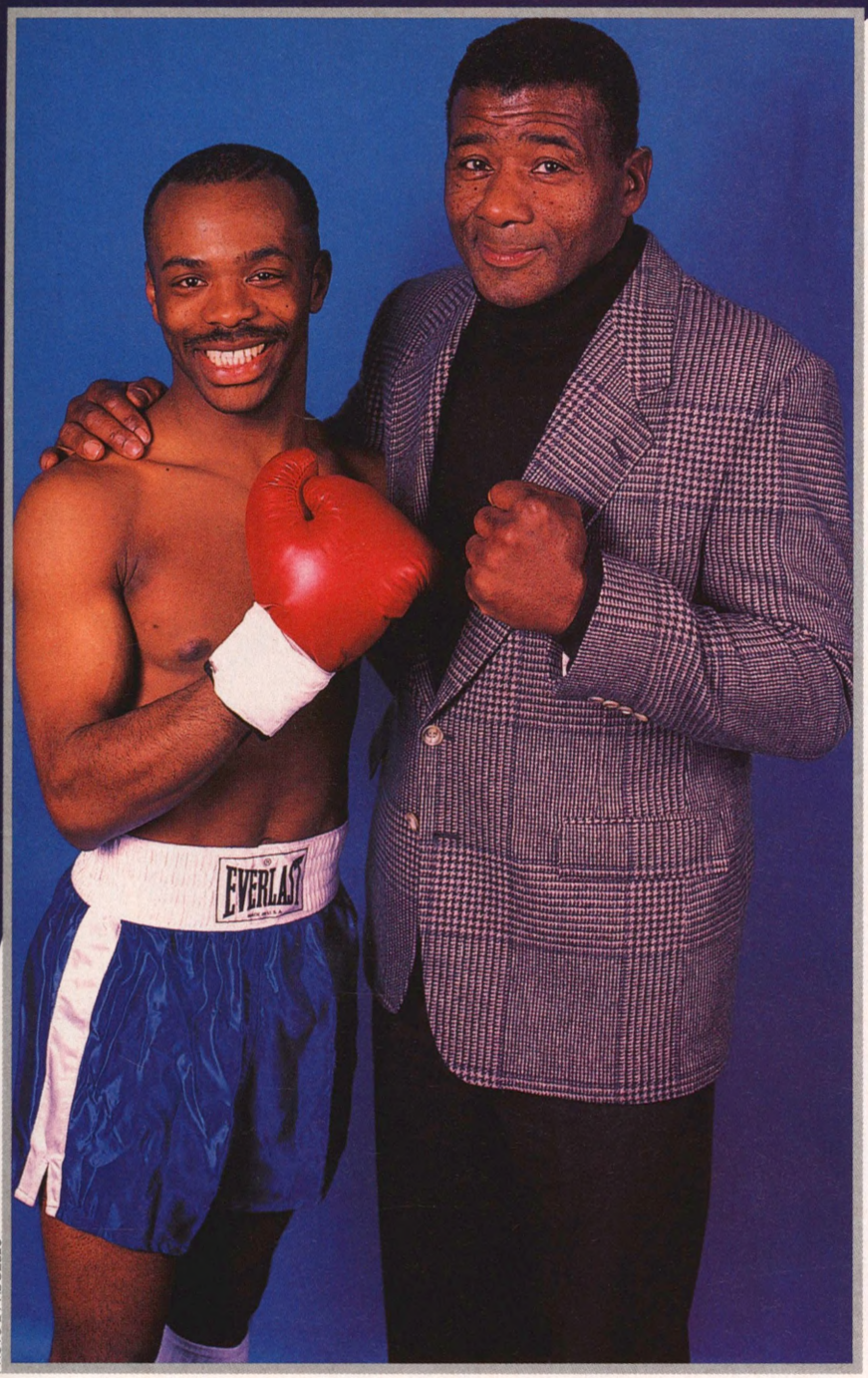


PHOTO BY AL BELLO

Patterson and his adopted son, Tracy Harris Patterson, who the former champ trained and guided to the WBC super bantamweight title in 1992.

But the wins and losses are overshadowed by his generosity. "He was 71, which isn't that old," said Jennifer. "But you look back at his life, he really packed a lot into it." He even got used to signing autographs. "He'd sign for everybody," said Burke. "No matter what he was doing, he'd stop and sign, and then he'd thank the person. He'd thank *them*."

Patterson once said of his life, "I wouldn't change one thing. All the embarrassing moments, all of the defeats, all of everything. Through all of this, I have learned 'me.' You see, I'm very fortunate. Most people aren't as fortunate as I am. I got to know myself. We think we know ourselves, but we really don't. I would say the defeats have taught me 'myself' more than the victories. So I wouldn't change anything. Not one thing." ■

Don Stradley is a freelance writer from Massachusetts and a regular contributor to this magazine.

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An Optimist?

A Pessimist?

An Idealist?

A Realist?

INSIDE THE MIND OF LOU DiBELLA

By Eric Raskin

PHOTO BY PAUL HAWTHORNE/GETTY IMAGES

Lou DiBella has remained optimistic through his early trials and tribulations as a promoter. Once fueled by negativity, DiBella is sustained by an attitude that now points more upward.

When you see the writing on the wall, you get out.

But when you see what's hanging on the walls of Lou DiBella's office, you understand why he's stayed in.

There's a boxing glove signed by Muhammad Ali, and another one signed by Nelson Mandela. There are framed tickets from the 1960 Rome Olympics. There's a signed photo of Angelo Dundee, two striking photos of Micky Ward, and a huge drawing of Sonny Liston wearing a Santa hat. There's a photo of DiBella on the set of *Rocky Balboa*. There's a snapshot of DiBella and Evander Holyfield, taken back when both of them still had relatively full heads of hair. There's a caricature of DiBella swinging a baseball bat at Cedric Kushner. There are framed press clippings all over.

Every time DiBella has opened his mouth since leaving his job at HBO in 2000 to start DiBella Entertainment, he's vented frustration over the way the boxing business

works, to the point of often sounding like he's on the verge of a pulling a "no mas." DiBella has, to a large degree, been beaten down. But he hasn't quit. And the way he decorates his office on Seventh Avenue in the Chelsea section of New York, the way he's turned it into a shrine to the sports world (a cluttered shrine that the *Queer Eye* guys would probably have a field day with, but a shrine just the same), explains why.

Lou DiBella loves boxing. He loves the way it can elevate his spirit on those rare occasions when everything goes right. He loves it enough to put up with all the bull. He loves it enough to keep dreaming about ways to change the business even though, deep down, he knows he doesn't have the power to change it.

"I'm not the only guy who this can be said of, but I'm a fan. I believe that boxing endures. I still believe that a great fight is more exciting than any other sporting event," DiBella, 45, told THE RING. "But I'm extremely concerned about the state of the industry. I think that the industry has helped destroy itself. We destroy ourselves by allowing ourselves to be pushed around by four sanctioning organizations that are largely unaccountable. We destroy ourselves when some of us fight against a national commission. We destroy ourselves when we make matches that are such mismatches as to be dangerous. We destroy ourselves when we throw too much product on pay-per-view. The industry has been self-destructive. And if that doesn't change, we're going to continue to be marginalized. But we'll never disappear. We're like the sex industry. We aren't going away. People will always pay to watch other people fight. And there will always be poor kids who will try to fight their way out."

And that's where DiBella comes in. Whereas some promoters seem like their goal is to take those poor kids and use them to make themselves rich, DiBella genuinely comes off as a guy who wants to see those poor kids get rich. Of course, he wants to make money

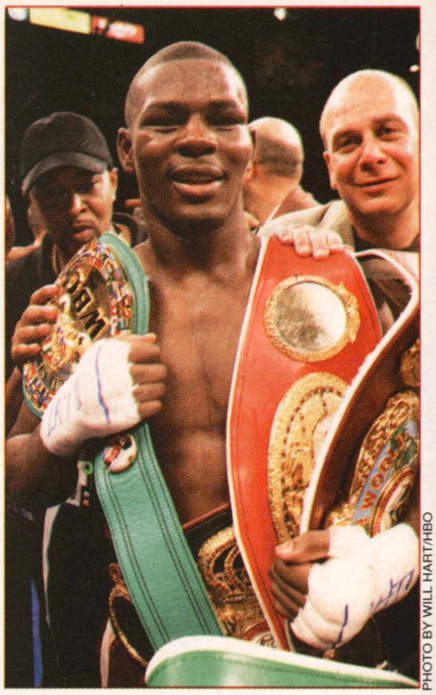


PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

What's catapulted DiBella to the forefront of boxing today is that he has a marketable superstar in middleweight world champion Jermain Taylor. DiBella says Taylor deserves the credit for where DBE is. Taylor admits he felt the weight of DBE in his two fights against Bernard Hopkins.

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

DiBella thought he had corralled the future of boxing when he landed a number of Olympians from the '00 team. But Ricardo Williams (front row, left) had discipline problems, which have resulted in jail time, and Michael Bennett (back row, left) was a complete bust.

too. But he truly seems to care about his fighters. He truly seems to care about *all* fighters. Boxing is in his bloodstream. And that's why a man who five years ago was talking about an exit strategy and about being out of this business by now is still around—and, after some rocky times, is, in fact, going strong.

DiBella promotes (yes, he is a "promoter" these days, even if he shunned that label at first and still doesn't believe the terms "promoter" and "manager" have much meaning in today's world) the undisputed middleweight champion of the world, Jermain Taylor. He's also accumulated a fairly deep pool of prospects and contenders. The monthly Manhattan club shows he began running a few years ago—the "Broadway Boxing" series—now have a television outlet that spreads beyond just the New York area. DiBella has had his dark days with DBE, from the collapses of some of his prized 2000 Olympic signings, most notably Ricardo Williams, to the bitter feud with Bernard Hopkins, a fighter DiBella helped guide to the promised land only to be ditched and later libeled by him. In 2002 and 2003, the roof seemed to be caving in on DiBella. So he found a new, less-expensive roof, moving from Rockefeller Center to his more spacious Chelsea office. And things have turned around for him. Almost six years into his post-HBO life, DiBella, if not a full-on success story, is at least in the process of succeeding.

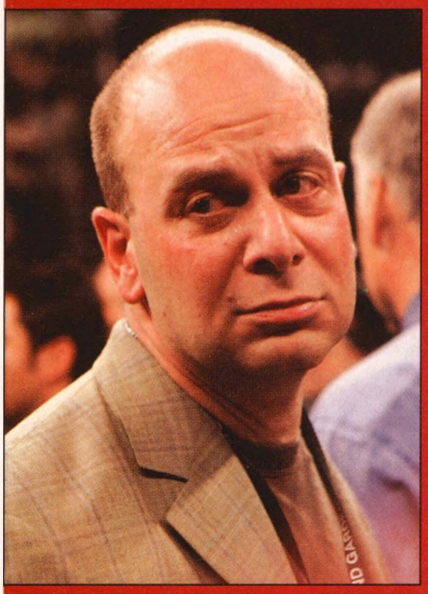
"The big difference now with DiBella Entertainment, from a few years ago, is I have a superstar," DiBella said, referencing Taylor. "Frankly, if you don't have a superstar, you have very little leverage in this marketplace. If you don't have a superstar, you're screwed. But I do have a superstar, and I'm lucky enough that the kid I think is a superstar is only 27 years old, and I'm doing well. Look, considering that Bernard Hopkins f___ed me royally after I brought him to the precipice, I'm not in the amazing shape right now that I could be in. But that did happen, and I had a period of time when a lot of people were writing me off. And that was only three years ago.

"Look where I am now. I certainly think my company is on the rise, and I don't think anyone would argue with that. Am I making enormous amounts of money? No. But am I solvent? Yeah. Am I running a business now that has an intelligent model on how to operate, that's staffed appropriately and capable of sustaining itself? Yeah, I am. I think that differentiates me from a lot of people. I think, really, there are five, or six, or maybe seven promotional companies right now that are operating fairly effectively and in the black, and that's about it."

If DiBella's company, with its six full-time employees, is indeed one of the few that's profitable, then Taylor deserves the credit DiBella gives him for making that possible. Taylor, who describes DiBella as someone who "really cares," admits he felt the pressure in his fights with Hopkins to come through for DBE.

"I knew those fights meant a lot to Lou," Taylor said. "I felt and knew I was

Talking Like A Promoter



DiBella has come to the glum conclusion that he can't change the business of boxing, but he continues to fight on for what he believes needs to be corrected—for the love of boxing.

Back when Lou DiBella worked for HBO, he was known for giving great quotes and for frank and unbiased opinions on fighters. As you might expect, since leaving HBO, DiBella's opinions on fighters have become a wee bit more biased. But he's still a quote machine. Here are some of DiBella's not-so-impartial views on some of DBE's best young fighters:

Lou on Andre Berto: "I have very little doubt that Berto is the best young prospect in the country. In a weird way, the best thing that ever happened to me was that he didn't medal in the Olympics. Because he was the guy I wanted all along; he was really my first-round draft choice. I always thought he was the better prospect than the other Andres [Ward and Dirrell]."

Lou on Paulie Malignaggi: "I don't think he's been marketed as a guy people should love to hate. I think it's love *or* hate. There's a big difference. Anyone who knows the kid outside of the ring, anyone who's worked with him, likes him. The first fight he ever saw live was a Naseem Hamed fight, and that was probably the biggest influence on Paulie. Paulie understands that you have to make people notice you. Part of the reason he got a fight with Miguel Cotto is because he's Paulie—because he's cocky, and because he has a mouth. Paulie wants people to react to him. He doesn't want them to hate him. But he'd rather they hate him than not notice him."

Lou on Curtis Stevens: "I think Stevens would knock Andre Ward cold right now. Right now, Stevens is the most devastating puncher that I've seen among the young kids."

Lou on Jermain Taylor: "I took a lot of criticism for putting Jermain in too easy for a while, and then I started taking criticism for putting Jermain in too hard. You sort of can't win. But you know what? He was ready for Hopkins. He was ready for a 40-year-old Hopkins. And that was proven no matter whether you believe he won or lost the first fight by two points. And I don't think there was any doubt about the second fight. You'd have to be biased in favor of Hopkins not to think Jermain won the second fight."

—E.R.

DiBella says the Hopkins situation will always rankle him to some degree but that he's past the hate ... "carrying around hate and having acid in your gut, that doesn't do anything for you."

PHOTO BY ARNALDO MAGNANI/GETTY IMAGES

carrying the torch for DiBella Entertainment."

Taylor was scheduled to carry that torch once more against Winky Wright as this magazine went to press, but even if Wright jabs the flame out, DBE has turned into more than just a one-fighter business. The big reason for that: Broadway Boxing.

"I refuse to be reliant on ESPN's $20,000 bulls__t budget to develop my fighters," DiBella said. "And I was willing to make an investment, which meant losing money for a while as I was developing the series to be able to develop my own fighters. Sechew Powell was developed there. Paulie Malignaggi was developed there. Curtis Stevens is being developed there, and Andre Berto is being developed there. We're in over 30 million homes right now. Just to make a comparison, I'm in approximately the same number of homes as HBO is. HBO's in 30-to-35 million homes. I have a lot of talented guys, and Broadway Boxing has allowed me to develop them the way I want to develop them."

DiBella considers his abilities to identify talent and to match fighters properly to be his two greatest attributes that have allowed him to succeed as a promoter. During his time making fights at HBO, the Brooklyn native watched matchmakers like Top Rank's Bruce Trampler develop fighters, and he came into promoting with more insight into that art than most. Some might question his talent-identifying abilities based on failures such as silver medalist Williams or fellow '00 Olympian Michael Bennett. But certainly, when you factor in his track record at HBO, DiBella has reason to think highly of himself.

"I don't want to sound like an egomaniac, but I think I was better at making fights than anyone that's made them on television in recent decades," DiBella said. (Sorry, Lou, you do sound like an egomaniac. But that doesn't make the statement any less true.) "The reason I was very good at that is I was able to identify talent. I signed Oscar De La Hoya

to HBO after his eighth pro fight. You look at all the guys I signed to contracts when I was at HBO. It speaks for itself."

Fellow promoter Bob Arum agrees: "Lou was the best ever at HBO. He really understood the sport."

Interestingly, Arum and DiBella had a falling-out when the former HBO honcho got into promoting. But they eventually patched things up and started working together, including co-promoting June's Malignaggi-Miguel Cotto show. When exactly did they patch things up? "When Lou learned what promoting entailed," Arum said backhandedly. "He is getting to the point where he is a real pro as a promoter—it is great working with him."

Arum's not the only promoter who was turned off by DiBella's attempts to flip the boxing business on its head when he first started. The old guard is always resistant to change, and DiBella, whose calls for a promoters' summit a few years back fell on deaf ears, came into promoting asking for so much change that he should have been carrying around a tin cup. DiBella still believes sweeping fundamental changes would help the sport, but he's also developed an appreciation for why promoters behave the way they do.

Still, he'd like to see more promoters do things that benefit the sport long-term, and he doesn't expect Arum or Don King to fall in line.

"They are amazingly productive for two men in their mid-70s—but they're two men in their mid-70s. And they're rich as sh_t. They don't have to be concerned about the future of the sport," DiBella said. "Who does have to be concerned? Right now, I think Todd DuBoef has some concerns about the future. Main Events, Golden Boy, Gary Shaw, myself, Art Pelullo—everyone else is younger than those two."

DiBella still believes everything he said when he first got into promoting and was railing on the powers that be. What he doesn't still believe is that change is possible. He notes that there's no consistency in the business, that boxing is a series of independent transactions where the whole is no greater—perhaps even less than—the sum of the parts. He points out that television budgets have fallen dramatically across the board. He laments that boxing writing has become largely relegated to the Internet, and that there's only one newspaper boxing writer left in the U.S. who covers boxing full-time.

PHOTO BY FRANK MICELOTTA/GETTY IMAGES

DiBella's company is much more solvent than it was a few years ago. A wise partnership with entertainment mogul Damon Dash has enhanced DBE, as has the success of Broadway Boxing, which DiBella has used as a vehicle for developing young talent.

"My idealism remains. But the idea that I can change the system, that no longer remains," DiBella said. "You can't change the beast, at least not right now, and it's not going to be a reality show that fixes boxing. All I believe is that I can function in a way that's consistent with my principles and ethics. I still can look in the mirror. I don't do anything that I feel ashamed by. But I don't have the same sense of being willing to fight windmills that I used to have. Life's too short to f___ing fight windmills. And the truth of the matter is, you look how f___ed up our government is, our political system is, and everything else ... and you're trying to blow your brains out to fix the sport of boxing? That's probably not the healthiest way to live.

"Same with the Hopkins situation. It will always bother me. But I'm past the hate. I'm past having it consume me. And there was a period of time where it really did consume me. But life's too short, and hate's not a great thing to carry around with you. All the negativity—look, my biggest complaint about the sport, and I think a lot of people would agree with me, is there's far too much negative energy. In boxing, the negative energy eclipses the positive energy by far. And carrying even more negative energy than is necessary, like carrying around hate and having acid in your gut, that doesn't do anything for you."

It's an ironic statement from the man who's drawn more attention to the negative aspects of the state of boxing than anyone else in recent years. But we think we get what DiBella's saying. He'll shine a light on negativity when there's something that can potentially be done about it. But he won't dwell on negative occurrences of his past, because nothing positive can come out of that.

It's hard to guess how much longer DiBella will remain a boxing promoter. He figures it won't be much more than another five years, but we heard a similar line from him when he first started out. If things keep going well for him, if his fighters keep winning and Broadway Boxing's reach keeps growing, he might follow the Arum/King model and become the elder statesman of promoters one day. But no matter how well things might go, there will always be a system for DiBella to rail against, and he will always fill reporters' tape recorders with quotes about how our sport is dying and needs saving.

It'll sound negative as hell. But deep down, it's fueled by positivity. It's fueled by a love for the sport. The same love that's kept DiBella going until now. ■

[Summary]

Heavyweights

Samuel Peter KO 1 Julius Long
Alonzo Butler KO 5 Zack Page
Jameel McCline W 10 Rob Calloway
Luan Krasniqi W 10 David Bostice
DaVarryl Williamson KO 4 Mike Mollo
Danny Williams KO 3 Adnan Serin
Cedric Boswell KO 2 Wallace McDaniel
Luciano Zolyone KO 2
Julio Abel Gonzalez
Michael Marrone KO 1 Dan Whetzel
Calvin Riley KO 1 Mike Needling
Brian Minto W 8 Billy Zumbrun
Terry Smith W 8 Louis Monaco

Cruiserweights

Nicolay Popov W 12 Nuri Seferi
Vincenzo Cantatore W 10
Jean Claude Bikoi
Emmanuel Nwodo KO 1 Ron Krull

Light Heavyweights

Clinton Woods KO 6 Jason DeLisle
(*Retains IBF Title*)
Zsolt Erdei KO 10 Paul Murdoch
Adrian Diaconu W 12 Andre Thysse

Super Middleweights

Markus Beyer Tech. Draw 4 Sakio Bika
(*Retains WBC Title*)
Anthony Mundine W 12 Danny Green
Allan Green KO 6 Donnie McCrary
Alejandro Berrio KO 6 Yusaf Mack
Ann Wolfe KO 2 Cassandra Giger

Middleweights

Arthur Abraham W 12 Kofi Jantuah
Gianfranco Rosi W 12
Christophe Karagoz
Sergio Mora KO 7
Archak TerMeliksetian
Raul Marquez KO 9 Miguel Hernandez
Andre Ward KO 6 Andy Kolle
Paul Clavette W 8 Martin Desjardins

Junior Middleweights

Oscar De La Hoya KO 6
Ricardo Mayorga
(*Wins WBC Title*)
Jose Antonio Rivera W 12
Alejandro Garcia
(*Wins WBA Title*)
Kassim Ouma W 12
Marco Antonio Rubio
Stephane Desormiers W 10
Adam Green
Carson Jones KO 3 Adam Capo
Hercules Kyvelos KO 2
Jeff Carpenter
Alfonso Gomez D 8
Jesse Feliciano

PHOTO BY CAMERON SPENCER/GETTY IMAGES

Super middleweight Mundine jolts nemesis Green with a right

Welterweights

Ricky Hatton W 12 Luis Collazo
(*Wins WBA Title*)
Mehrdud Takaloo W 12
Eamonn Magee
Sharmba Mitchell W 10
Jose Luis Cruz
Kazuyuki Matsumiya W 10
Jakawanglek Saktaewan
Colin McNeil KO 1 Gary Young
Emmanuel Clottey W 8
Francisco Campos

Junior Welterweights

Lovemore N'dou W 12
Jakkirt Suwunnalird
Andreas Kotelnik W 12 Richard Reina
Henry Bruseles W 10 Cesar Bazan
Lamont Peterson W 10 Mario Ramos
Emiko Raika W 10 Won Mi Chung
Edgar Santana W 10 Tomas Barrientes
Feifong Kogure KO 7 Singmanee Sor
Osvaldo Lara KO 4 Romulo Juarez
Takehiko Toki KO 4
Teerachai Muangsurin
Juan Mosquera KO 2 Edinson Teheran
Amir Khan W 6 Laszlo Komjathi

Lightweights

Acelino Freitas W 12 Zahir Raheem
Julio Diaz W 12 Ricky Quiles
Edner Cherry KO 11 Monty Meza-Clay
Jose Aguiniga W 10 Andres Ledesma
Lee Akinori Kanai W 10 Eiji Sato
Hiroyasu Matsuzaki KO 10
Tom Nagaoka
Junji Murakami KO 9 Yong Bum
Jose Santa Cruz KO 6 Chikashi Inada
Carlos Mairena KO 5
Leonardo Gonzalez
Nihito Arakawa KO 3 Yoshinobu Sakai
Anthony Peterson KO 3 Jermaine White
Rene Gonzalez KO 1 Natividad Otero
Hiroyasu Matsuzaki KO 1 Tom Nagaoka

Junior Lightweights

Marco Antonio Barrera W 12
Rocky Juarez
(*Retains WBC Title*)
Vicente Mosquera W 12
Jose Pablo Estrella
(*Retains WBA Title*)
Jorge Barrios KO 1 Janos Nagy
Joan Guzman W 10 Javier Jauregui
Nobuhito Honmo W 12 Jimrex Jaca
Alex Arthur Tech. Win 7
Sergey Gulyakevich

PHOTO BY DONALD MIRALLE/GETTY IMAGES

Junior featherweight Daniels bangs a lefthook into Oquendo

Ramon Maas KO 8 Felipe Diaz
Aozora Nishida KO 3 Katsutoshi Seto
Miyama Sora KO 3 Spiral Hiro

Featherweights

Eric Aiken W Disq. 8 Valdemir Pereira
(*Wins IBF Title*)
Roinet Caballero KO 12
Ernesto Vasquez
Andy Morris W 12 Rendall Munroe
Ahmed Elomar KO 11
Raymundo Abesia
Kazuhisa Watanabe W 10
Ikuto Kobayashi
Alexander Hrulev W 10 Nikita Lukin
Yuki Sakamoto W 10
Dechsayarm Sithpordam
Rashiem Jefferson W 10 Manuel Perez
Nedal Hussein W 8 Petch Windy Sport
Gary Stark W 8 Luis Bolano

Junior Featherweights

Antonio Escalante W 12 Juan Ruiz
Jahongir Abdullaev W 10
Serikzhan Yeshmangbetov
Bernabe Concepcion W 10 Jake Verano
Sergio Medina W 10 Pablo Sepulveda
Alejandra Marina KO 8 Jackie Nava
Rey Bautista KO 3 Roberto Bonilla
Israel Gutierrez KO 2 Angel Diaz
Jonathan Oquendo W 8
Torrence Daniels

Bantamweights

Irene Pacheco W 12 Heriberto Ruiz
Alejandro Valdez W 12 Cecilio Santos
Anselmo Moreno W 10 Felix Machado
Mauricio Martinez W 10 Franklin Varela
Chatchai Sasakul KO 2 Dodong Discado

Junior Bantamweights

Luis Perez W 12 Dimitri Kirilov
(*Retains IBF Title*)
Eden Sonsona W 12 Eric Barcelona
Hiroshi Yoshiyama KO 1 Tong Twingym

Flyweights

Pongsaklek Wonjongkam W 12
Daigo Nakahiro
(*Retains WBC Title*)
Panomroonglek Kratingdaenggym W 12
Jun Eraham
Glenn Donaire W 12 Cesar Lopez
Victor Burgos W 10 Luis Doria
Danilo Lerio W 10 Louie Bantigue
Hussein Hussein KO 4
Kompayak Porpramook
Gabriel Ramirez W 8 Cristian Cardenas
Takefumi Sakata Tech. Win 6
Kenji Yoshida
Shingo Yamaguchi W 8
Shinichi Yamaguchi

Junior Flyweights

Roberto Vasquez W 12 Noel Arambulet
(*Retains WBA title*)
Edgar Velasquez W 10 Kermin Guardia
Walberto Ramos KO 7 Javier Tello

Strawweights

Eagle Kyowa W 12 Rodel Mayol
(*Retains WBC Title*)
Muhammad Rachman KO 6 Omar Soto
(*Retains IBF Title*)
Ivan Calderon KO 9 Miguel Tellez
Cho Rong Son W 10 Satoko Komimura
Ji Hyun Park W 10 Gong Jin

Acelino Freitas W 12 Zahir Raheem

Ledyard, Connecticut: Although it was the supporters of Freitas who were draped in Brazilian yellow and green, both the hard-hitting lightweight and his speedy counterpart, Raheem, were guilty of shedding these very colors at the Foxwoods Casino Bingo Hall.

Despite 20 years of professional experience between them, both pugs looked surprisingly green, putting forth an amateurish display not expected between two of the world's premier 135-pounders. And to the disappointment of the raucous 3,000 on hand, Freitas and Raheem also appeared quite yellow at times, both coming off as timid and reluctant in the matter of mixing it up. The result was a clumsy, uninspired snoozer that you wouldn't expect from an HBO *Boxing After Dark* headliner.

Though neither fighter seemed to deserve to win, it was Freitas, 38-1 (32), who eked out the split decision victory. While judge Clark Sammartino (USA) preferred the swift Raheem, 115-113, judges Steve Weisfeld (USA) and Glenn Feldman (USA) were more in synch with the pro-Freitas crowd, scoring it for the Brazilian, 115-113 and 116-112, respectively. THE RING had it 115-114 for Freitas.

In addition to the lack of inspiring punching, the fight was marred by slips, clinches, and various WWE tactics. In fact, a total of six times the action was halted due to either a slip or tackle, drawing immediate comparisons to several John Ruiz affairs.

It started as early as the first round, when Raheem and Freitas accidentally clashed skulls, leaving the latter to complain extensively to referee Steve Smoger (USA). Pawing at his head for a cut that wasn't there, Freitas' health concerns were reminiscent of his 2004 knockout loss to Diego Corrales in this very same venue, when he threw in the towel after a series of knockdowns.

On the other hand, Raheem, 27-2 (16), was being primped as possibly the next superstar of the lightweight division, but the 1996 U.S. Olympian resembled anything but the slickster who took apart Erik Morales in such brilliant fashion last September. Widely considered a blown-up featherweight, Raheem, 29, seemed unprepared for Freitas' wild, lunging style, resorting to excessive clutching and grabbing to fend off his stronger nemesis. With Freitas, 30, feeding an occasional taste of his crunching power, Raheem was unable to find the rhythm that worked so effectively against Morales.

Instead, the Philadelphia-born, Las Vegas-based Raheem, 135, was inclined to wrestle Freitas, 135, to the canvas twice (in rounds two and three). It wasn't until Freitas landed a hard left hook to close out the third that the fight had seen its first significant punch.

Raheem, who stood up firmly to Freitas' best shots, fired back only a few of his own, including a popping right on the kisser that left the Brazilian reeling in the sixth round. But Raheem's most effective work of the night came in the form of illegal takedowns, and his third of the night, resulting in an ugly crash at the end of the sixth round, nearly cost him a disqualification.

The next near-disaster didn't come until the waning moments of the ninth round, when Freitas unloaded an uppercut on Raheem's chin that left him wobbling along the ropes. But as Freitas basked in the chants of "Popo! Popo!" from the bleachers, Raheem appeared to steal the final two rounds, shooting some solid straight rights through Freitas' guard.

Still, a late surge was not enough to ensure victory for Raheem, who returns to the drawing board to plot out his future in the division.

"This place seems to me like it's just overpopulated with Brazilians," said Raheem, suggesting favoritism in the judges' scorecards. "Yeah, I took some good shots, but I felt like I got some good ones in too. I felt like I hurt him a few times."

Television: **HBO**
Promoter: **Banner Promotions**
(4-29-06)

Ted Bodenrader

PHOTO COURTESY OF HBO

Freitas struggles to sloppy win over Raheem

Eagle Kyowa W 12 Rodel Mayol

Tokyo, Japan: In a classic boxer vs. puncher matchup between two of the 105-pound division's best, Japan-based Thailander Eagle, 105, made his second successful defense of his second WBC title reign by winning a unanimous decision over previously unbeaten challenger Mayol, 105, Philippines, over 12 hard-fought rounds. Gale Van Hoy (USA) scored it 117-110, Chuck Hassett (USA) saw it 115-112, and Alejandro Rochin (Mexico) had it 114-113, all for the defending titleholder.

Dangerous left hooker Mayol, 24, had Eagle, 27, at bay in the second round. The Filipino effectively connected with vicious left hooks and repeatedly rocked the beltholder and made his right eye swell from underneath. From then until the fifth round, Mayol remained aggressive, attacking the cautious Thai. Eagle also sustained a gash over the left eyebrow due to an accidental butt in round five. It certainly seemed that it was going to be the hard-hitting Filipino's night.

In the sixth, however, Eagle started to retaliate and opened a cut on the cheek of the challenger. Eagle scored with short left-right combinations, while Mayol was so anxious that he kept missing big punches and gradually tired. Eagle cleverly battered the breadbasket of the challenger to visibly weaken him as the contest progressed.

In the 10th, Eagle had Mayol staggering with well-timed

PHOTO BY TORU YAMANAKA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Kyowa drops Mayol in the final round to cement victory

The Ring Fighter of the Month

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Oscar De La Hoya

The last time Oscar De La Hoya won a fight controversy-free? Cinco de Mayo weekend of 2003, when he hammered faded Yory Boy Campas. Since then he'd dropped a close verdict to Shane Mosley, won a controversial decision over lightly regarded Felix Sturm, and suffered a knockout at the hands of Bernard Hopkins. Then he took 20 months off. Heading into his fight Ricardo Mayorga on Cinco de Mayo weekend of 2006—a full three years since his last clear-cut win—De La Hoya had to have heard the whispers. People wondering if he had anything left. People wondering if he had any desire to be a fighter anymore. People wondering if he was still good enough to get by a crude brawler like Mayorga.

It was barely a minute into the fight that one of De La Hoya's trademark left hooks, thrown with blazing speed and uncanny precision, looking just like the ones he used to throw back when he was a 22-year-old lightweight wrecking ball, shut those whispers up. De La Hoya looked as good as he has in years, maybe even in a full decade, in dominating Mayorga. He stopped the Nicaraguan in six rounds, two less than it took the bigger, supposedly harder-hitting Felix Trinidad to do it. He made a statement.

"The Golden Boy," through all of his ups and downs, has always remained boxing's biggest superstar. But this was the first time in a long time that he looked like one of boxing's best fighters.

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER GETTY IMAGES

one-two combos. The 12th and final session saw Eagle, 16-1 (6), explode wicked left-right combinations to drop Mayol, 23-1 (17), to the deck. The fading Mayol gamely stood up and resumed fighting, but the final-round knockdown confirmed Eagle's victory after the hard-fought, crowd-pleasing competition.

The referee was **Vic Drakulich** (USA).
Promoter: **Kadoebi Jewel Promotions**
(5-6-06)
Joe Koizumi

Kassim Ouma W 12 Marco Antonio Rubio

***Las Vegas, Nevada*:** This bout with fringe contender Rubio on the Oscar De La Hoya-Ricardo Mayorga undercard started as a repeat of Ouma's disastrous loss to Roman Karmazin. But it ended much better for the former junior middleweight titleholder, as he rose from an early knockdown to win a split decision that really should have been unanimous.

Ouma, 153, came out in the opening round at the MGM Grand Garden Arena with his typical all-action style of fighting. Rubio, 153, Torreon, Mexico, was well-prepared for Ouma's style and, following the lead of what worked for Karmazin, threw straight right hands at his southpaw opponent. Those punches paid immediate dividends for Rubio, as he landed a clean right on Ouma's chin, causing him to stumble backward. Seizing the opportunity, Rubio unloaded with another right hand, this time sending Ouma to the canvas. He beat referee Joe Cortez' count and stayed on his feet for the remainder of his first round.

Ouma, born in Kampala, Uganda, and now fighting out of West Palm Beach, Florida, regained his senses for the second round and went back to his usual bunches of punches that often wear down his opponents. By moving to his left in the first round, Rubio, 25, had been careful in avoiding Ouma's straight left hands. But for whatever reason, he decided to give up that strategy and surprisingly started moving to his right, which put him in the line of fire for Ouma's lefts.

Ouma, 27, was setting up his left well with a good double right jab. Ouma, 24-2-1 (15) looked like he was the one dictating and controlling the rhythm of the fight in the middle rounds.

Rubio, 32-3-1 (29), had returned to the same arena where he had been knocked out in 33 seconds by Kofi Jantuah in September 2004. Clearly, he was doing much better this time, but again he looked as though he was on his way to defeat. He tried to use his five-inch height advantage and keep Ouma off in the ninth, but it didn't work. They both stood mostly toe-to-toe in the last few rounds and both ended up with swollen eyes.

Dalby Shirley (USA) somehow scored the fight 114-113 for Rubio. Thankfully, he was overruled by Bill Graham (USA), who scored the fight 117-110 for Ouma, and Jerry Roth (USA), who saw it 116-111 for the Ugandan. THE RING scored the fight 116-111 for Ouma.

Television: **HBO PPV**
Promoter: **Golden Boy Promotions**
(5-6-06)
Wayne McCullough

Joan Guzman W 10 Javier Jauregui

Las Vegas, Nevada: Moving up in weight, Guzman showed excellent, slick boxing skills, but not very good weight-making skills, as he defeated Jauregui to somewhat mixed reviews in a high-profile slot on the De La Hoya-Mayorga undercard. Former 122-pound beltholder Guzman was originally slated to fight Scott Harrison on a different card for a 126-pound belt, but it's a good thing that fight fell apart, because "Little Tyson" couldn't even make a higher weight for this fight. The weight limit was set at 131 pounds, but Guzman came in at 132½. The fight still went ahead as planned, although Guzman, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, had to pay a portion of his purse to Jauregui, 130, Guadalajara, Mexico, as compensation.

Guzman began the fight moving around the ring using a quick left jab to keep his Mexican opponent off. He was

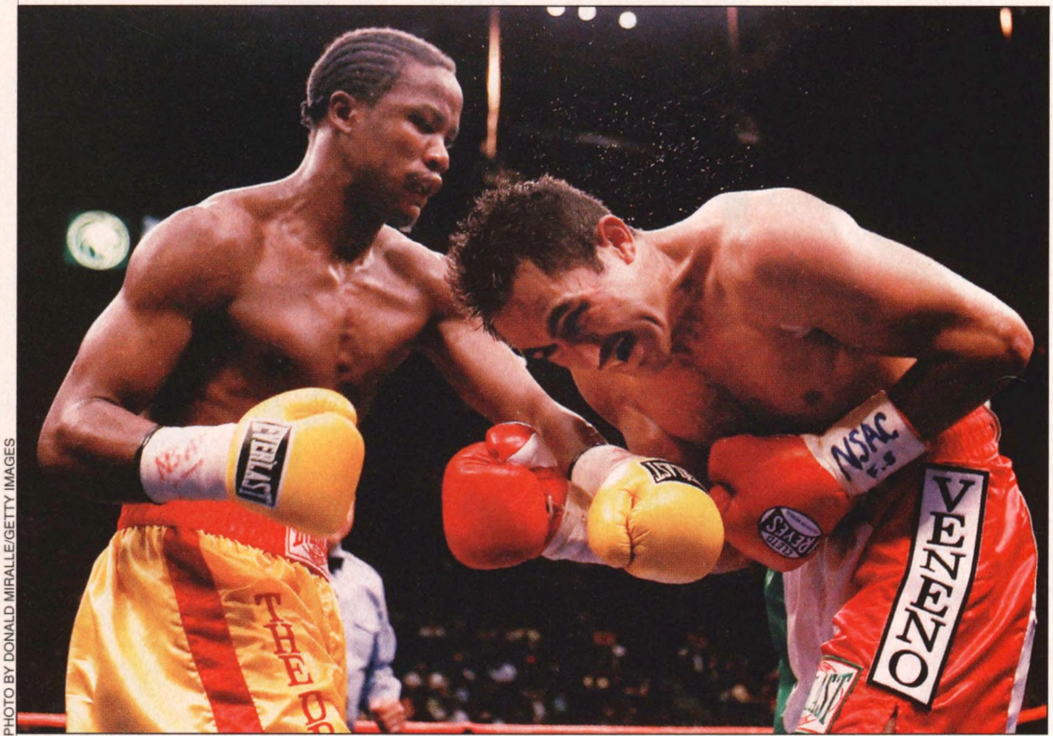

PHOTO BY DONALD MIRALLE/GETTY IMAGES

Ouma (left) battles back from knockdown to decision Rubio

showing hand speed in the first three rounds, and it seemed as if he was confusing the veteran former lightweight beltholder.

But Jauregui, 32, continued to try to get close and land overhand rights to Guzman's chin. He tried to land this shot in the third round, but Guzman connected immediately with a clean counter left hook to Jauregui's head, shaking him up a little.

Over the next few rounds it was all Guzman, 30, who landed left and right uppercuts at will. Referee Kenny Bayless (USA) watched closely as Guzman unloaded many shots to Jauregui's head.

PHOTO BY DONALD MIRALLE/GETTY IMAGES

Guzman rocks Jauregui with a left hook

The early-arriving fans at the MGM Grand Garden Arena were starting to get impatient with Guzman, as on a few occasions, when he seemed to hurt Jauregui, he backed off. Then he started to clown around, dropping his hands or shuffling his feet. It was later learned that Guzman, 25-0 (17), had hurt his hands in the fight, perhaps explaining his lack of finishing aggression. But credit also goes to Jauregui, 51-13-2 (35), who showed toughness despite being physically overmatched. Still, the only real success Jauregui had was in the ninth round, when he landed a few left hooks to Guzman's head and took the round on THE RING'S card.

Judges Jerry Roth (USA) and Robert Hoyle (USA) scored the fight 100-90, and Bill Graham (USA) saw it 99-91, the same as THE RING. Guzman now plans to take on the bigger names in boxing, but the question is, in what weight division?

Television: **HBO PPV**
Promoter: **Golden Boy Promotions**
(5-6-06)
Wayne McCullough

Jose Antonio Rivera W 12 Alejandro Garcia

Worcester, Massachusetts: While an ever-so-slightly higher profile junior middleweight fight between Oscar De La Hoya and Ricardo Mayorga was capturing most of the boxing world's attention some 2,700 miles away, Rivera and Garcia were busy putting on by far the most entertaining fight of the night, a six-knockdown slugfest at the DCU Center in Rivera's hometown. Whereas Rivera lost a debatable split decision the last time he fought in Worcester (against Luis Collazo 13 months earlier), there was no debating this one, as five of the six knockdowns belonged to the local fighter. Though the fight seemed up for grabs through eight rounds, "El Gallo" pulled away with three late knockdowns to win comfortably in a fight far more thrilling than the ultimately wide scores might suggest.

In the very first round, Garcia, 152½, Tijuana, Mexico, stepped into a hard jab and dropped to a knee for a brief count. Just as the bell was about to ring to end the round, Rivera, 152½, floored "Terra" again with a right to the temple. Not only had Rivera jumped out to an early 10-7 lead in the fight, but he'd also established that, despite coming up from welterweight, he could punch like a true junior middle.

The heavy-handed Garcia came back, however, to force a slugfest and edge the next two rounds, and then he took over in the fourth, chasing Rivera around the ring with bodyshots and then dropping him with a right to the jaw late in the round. Now it was Rivera who needed to stage a comeback, and he did precisely that, stunning Garcia, 26, with a left hook in the fifth, and seemingly winning the sixth and the highly entertaining seventh as well.

Rivera appeared to have a slight lead by round nine, when a huge, sudden right hand to the jaw crumpled Garcia, 25-2 (23), in a heap. The holder of the virtually meaningless WBA 154-pound belt showed incredible recuperative powers, though, willing himself up and battling back immediately. But Rivera, 33, broke his spirit in the 10th, dropping him yet again with a left hook in the corner. And for a little extra emphasis, Rivera, 38-4-1 (24), scored one last knockdown with 10 seconds remaining in round 12, bringing the exuberant crowd to its collective feet.

All three judges were from Massachusetts, but any potential hometown bias was inconsequential in this fight. Leo Gerstel and Roland Milton both had it 116-106, and Don O'Neill saw it 114-107, all for Rivera. THE RING scored it 115-108.

The referee was **Dick Flaherty** (USA).
Television: **Showtime**
Promoter: **Don King Productions**
(5-6-06)

Luis Perez W 12 Dimitry Kirilov

Worcester, Massachusetts: The long but undistinguished alphabet title reign of Perez got a little bit longer, and a little bit less distinguished, when he snuck past unheralded mandatory challenger Kirilov on an unpopular split decision at the DCU Center. Kirilov fought a near-perfect fight, but he needed to fight a *completely* perfect one to get the decision over the rusty Perez, and one mistake ended up costing him the fight. It also allowed Perez to make just his third defense of the IBF junior bantamweight title that he won nearly 3½ years earlier.

After a close first round, Kirilov, 114½, St. Petersburg, Russia, began outboxing Perez, 114½, Managua, Nicaragua, in the second, landing clean right hands while making Perez miss time and again. Perez was jabbing tentatively, and Kirilov took advantage, stunning Perez with a nice counter right hand in the third. The fourth was an even bigger round for the Russian, but Perez did some nice bodywork to arguably win the fifth.

It started to turn from a boxing match to a slugfest in the sixth, and Kirilov seemed equally at ease trading punches, getting the better of the titleholder with lefts and rights. Perez, falling behind, got more aggressive in the seventh, and the round was tough to score; Kirilov landed a couple of eye-catching right hands, but Perez was the busier, more consistent offensive fighter.

Early in the eighth, Kirilov, 27, made the one crucial mistake that would cost him the bout, standing still in front of the 28-year-old Perez for a moment too long. Southpaw Perez let loose a right hook to the body, then came upstairs with a right hook to the chin, dropping Kirilov suddenly. He beat the count of referee John Zablocki (USA), but he had to hold on to survive—until Perez began to tire, opening the door for Kirilov to come back late in the memorable stanza.

And it also opened the door for the challenger to finish the fight strong. He outboxed Perez in the ninth, and landed a huge left-right combo at the very end of round 10 to steal that round as well. The 11th and 12th were both close, action-packed rounds, with Kirilov taking the final round to win on THE RING'S scorecard, 114-113. He also won the last round on all three judges' cards, but it wasn't enough to win him the fight. Paul Barry (USA) had Kirilov winning comfortably, 117-110. But Mike Ancona (USA) had it 115-113 for Perez, and David Hess (USA) scored it 114-113 for Perez, allowing "El Demoledor" to retain the belt.

"I clearly won the fight," said Kirilov, 28-3 (10). "This is clearly unfair."

Perez, 24-1 (15), disagreed, but at least acknowledged that Kirilov had given him a tough time. "I will give him a rematch if I need to," he said.

Television: **Showtime**
Promoter: **Don King Productions**
(5-6-06)

Pongsaklek Wonjongkam W 12 Daigo Nakahiro

Bangkok, Thailand: WBC flyweight beltholder Pongsaklek battered Nakahiro in the scorching Bangkok heat at the 11th Infantry Regiment to win a 12-round unanimous decision and successfully defend the title for the 14th time. With the victory, Pongsaklek equaled Miguel Canto's flyweight division record for consecutive title defenses.

PHOTO BY SCOTT MALLON

Wonjongkam (right) notched defense number 14 against Nakahiro

Southpaw Pongsaklek, 112, Thailand started the bout firing repeated lead lefts followed by right hooks to the body. Nakahiro, 112, Japan, shot back with straight rights, but by the end of the first round, Pongsaklek's punches had left their mark and reddened the face of the challenger.

The second round began quietly, but shortly before the bell, a Pongsaklek barrage sent the 24-year-old

Nakahiro to the canvas. The gutsy challenger pulled himself up at the count of seven, and seconds later, the bell sounded to end the round.

In the fourth stanza, Pongsaklek, 28, continued with the straight left to the body and mixed the attack with right uppercuts and right hooks to the kidneys of Nakahiro. Midway through the round, Pongsaklek landed a punch that opened a slit over the left eye of Nakahiro.

Nakahiro picked up the pace in round five, scoring with two uppercuts, snapping out his jab, and following it with hard rights to the face of Pongsaklek. It was the first round of the fight that Nakahiro may have actually won.

Pongsaklek scored with three straight uppercuts to grab back the momentum at the beginning of round six and resumed his body attack. By the end of round seven, the persistent assault had taken its toll; Nakahiro looked visibly tired and, in the closing moments of the round, was lying against the ropes in a purely defensive mode.

PHOTO BY DUANE LONG

Cintron comes over Estrada's jab with a searing right

Both fighters found their second wind in round eight. Nakahiro was desperately attempting to find a home for the straight right. Pongsaklek would have none of it, though. During one exchange, he scored with a short, crunching left cross, staggering Nakahiro, 13-2 (4), and restating his superiority.

By the final round, Pongsaklek was in complete control. Midway through the round, an accidental headbutt opened a razor-thin, one-inch gash over the right eye of the Thailander, but it was irrelevant. Pongsaklek won 120-107 on the cards of Franz Marti and Brian McMahon, and 119-110 on Raul Nieves' card.

"[Nakahiro] was motivated for this fight," said Pongsaklek, 61-2 (31). "I'm the champion and he came to take it away from me. Every fighter who challenges me gets up for the fight because they want my belt."

(5-1-06)

Scott Mallon

Kermit Cintron KO 10 David Estrada

Palm Beach, Florida: In just his second fight back following his devastating kayo loss to Antonio Margarito, Cintron's heart was put to the test in a welterweight scorcher against fellow contender Estrada. If he was looking for an excuse to pack it in, Estrada gave him plenty. But Cintron, though not any more defensively sound than he was when Margarito crushed him, showed the toughness and determination he'll need to get back to where he was, outwilling and eventually overpowering Estrada in a possible Fight of the Year candidate at the Palm Beach Convention Center.

Cintron is now being trained by Emanuel Steward, but he didn't have the Kronk legend in his corner for this fight, as Steward was in Germany preparing Wladimir Klitschko for his bout with Chris Byrd. Early on, Cintron, 146½, Reading, Pennsylvania, missed Steward's expertise, as he struggled to figure out how to hold off the pressure of the Angelo Dundee-schooled Estrada, 147, Miami, Florida. Cintron, 26, absorbed several solid left hooks in the opening round, and found himself backing up in the third after taking more hooks and some looping right hands. Midway through the third, Cintron suffered a small cut in the corner of his right eye from a head clash. It was beginning to feel like a repeat of the Margarito disaster.

But by the fifth round, the same round in which he was stopped by Margarito, Cintron began to turn this fight around. He landed a good left hook to the jaw and then got Estrada's attention with a right uppercut. The two welter warriors engaged in fantastic exchanges throughout the round, bringing the fans to their feet.

Estrada, 27, was showing a heck of a beard as the heavy-handed Cintron landed more flush shots in the sixth, but Estrada's knees finally buckled from a right hand late in the round. A follow-up left to the ribs didn't make the Chicago-born Floridian feel any better. But he did defiantly pound his chest at the bell—only to head to the wrong corner, which Cintron pointed out to him with a malicious smile on his face.

Both men landed well in the exciting seventh; first it was Cintron with a right uppercut, then it was Estrada with a left hook. But on the whole, Cintron's bigger punches were having the greater effect, and his lefts to the body were clearly sapping Estrada's strength.

About 30 seconds into the 10th round of a scheduled 12, Cintron rocked Estrada with a right cross and then a left hook.

Two more long rights from the taller Cintron drove Estrada to the ropes, and after a left hook, Estrada, 18-3 (9), slumped down on the bottom ropes for what referee James Warring (USA) correctly ruled a knockdown. Cintron, 26-1 (24), pounced immediately, landing a pair of jabs, a left to the body, and a right uppercut that snapped Estrada's head back, prompting Warring to jump in at the 1:13 mark, bringing the thriller to an end.

Television: **ESPN2**
Promoter: **Main Events**
(4-19-06)

Sergio Mora KO 7 Archak Ter-Meliksetian

Las Vegas, Nevada: Winning a belt on *The Contender* was really just the start of Mora's journey toward living up to the reality show's title. To establish himself as a real contender in the middleweight division, he needs to defeat contenders who weren't on the show, and he took his first step down that path by pulling himself off the canvas to stop the decent Ter-Meliksetian on an ESPN card from the Aladdin Hotel and Casino.

"I wasn't hurt," Mora said of the second-round knockdown he suffered. "It woke me up. I got up and I started using angles and throwing bodyshots. It was a flash knockdown, but legitimate."

Mora, 157½, Los Angeles, California, had four good wins on *The Contender* and won the tournament outright. In his first post-show fight, he won a split decision over another *Contender* contestant, Peter Manfredo, whom he'd also beaten—much more comfortably the first time—in the season finale of the TV series in May 2005.

The fight against Ter-Meliksetian, 159, Los Angeles via Armenia, started off slowly, and the impatient fans (perhaps spoiled by the editing of the *Contender* fights) were not happy. The crowd started to warm up in the second as Mora, 26, jumped in with a right hand, leaving himself exposed. He got caught with a clean left hook to the chin from the taller Ter-Meliksetian that sent him to the canvas for a brief count.

But from the third round on, the quicker-fisted Mora took control. He picked his shots well and his left hooks were accurate, though his footwork wasn't the best. He tried to switch from orthodox to southpaw throughout the fight, but left himself open on occasions. Ter-Meliksetian continued to march forward trying to land something significant, but Mora was breaking him down round after round, landing brutal bodyshots with both hands.

It was clear to see Ter-Meliksetian slowing after six rounds, but he was still trying to win. In round seven, he tried to make Mora trade in close. Mora obliged with two big left hooks to the head and then a flurry of punches that hurt "Shark Attack" and sent him into the ropes. Just as Ter-Meliksetian recovered and began to throw back, referee Robert Byrd (USA) jumped in and stopped the fight at 2:44 of the round.

Ter-Meliksetian, 15-4 (12), protested the stoppage, but Mora, 18-0 (4), was declared the winner by TKO. Incidentally, Mora was well ahead on the judges' scorecards at the time of the stoppage.

Mora's best weight division is probably junior middleweight, but he has also shown interest in the higher weight class and a possible fight with the winner of the middleweight championship bout between Jermain Taylor and Winky Wright. This was a nice win over Ter-Meliksetian, but it may be a bit soon for "The Latin Snake" to jump into that elite class.

Promoter: **Tournament of Contenders**
(5-4-06)
Wayne McCullough

PHOTO BY DANNY MOLOSHOK/ESPN

Mora fires a right hand at Ter-Meliksetian en route to seventh-round TKO victory

Alfonso Gomez D 8 Jesse Feliciano

Las Vegas, Nevada: In another *Contender* star vs.

non-*Contender* bout on the undercard of Mora-Ter-Meliksetian, Gomez took on an opponent he was quite familiar with. Feliciano, who was fresh off an impressive win over Vince Phillips, had fought two close fights with Gomez prior to the taping of the reality show, with each winning once. Their series remains deadlocked still, as they gave the fans at the Aladdin Hotel and Casino eight action-packed rounds en route to a majority-draw verdict.

Feliciano said, "I wish it was 10 or 12 rounds. I would have knocked him out."

Gomez explained, "My legs went out on me. I wasn't able to move. I kind of got them back, but that's what happened."

Gomez, 151, started off during the first three rounds boxing smartly, moving laterally, picking his shots well. Feliciano, 151, was trying hard to land shots, but when he got close, Gomez, Guadalajara, Mexico, wasn't there. Gomez, 24, was able to land clean left hooks to Feliciano's body and head at will. In the second round, Feliciano, Las Vegas, Nevada, began throwing bunches of punches, but Gomez seemed to enjoy the challenge of standing toe to toe trading with him. Gomez landed the more accurate punches, especially when a right uppercut and left hook rocked his opponent's head backward.

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Peter blows away outclassed Long in the opening round

Gomez was also controlling the fourth round and making Feliciano miss until near the end of the round when Feliciano, 23, connected with a short right hand to his opponent's head that had Gomez in some trouble. Over the next few rounds, Feliciano, 14-5-3 (8), scored with accurate rights and lefts to the head, and although Gomez, 14-3-2 (5), was fighting back, Feliciano was doing the better work.

This was the first time Gomez had fought an eight-round fight, and his inexperience over that distance may have been a factor. Feliciano, meanwhile, didn't stop punching right up until the final bell.

Judge Adelaide Byrd (USA) scored the fight 77-75 for Gomez, but judges Dick Houck (USA) and Dave Moretti (USA) had it 76-76. THE RING also scored it 76-76.

Television: **ESPN**
Promoter: **Tournament of Contenders**
(5-4-06)
Wayne McCullough

Samuel Peter KO 1 Julius Long

Uncasville, Connecticut: If the jury was out after hard-hitting Samuel Peter's loss to Wladimir Klitschko, his return against Julius Long resulted in a mistrial. At least the crowd of over 3,000 at the Mohegan Sun got a good fight out of Brian Minto's close-shave win over Billy Zumbrun on the undercard.

There was an air of excitement in the arena as Peter, 256½, Las Vegas, Nevada, entered the ring to face the seven-foot-tall Long, 251, Romulus, Michigan. The normally intimidating Peter seemed dwarfed by his towering opponent. But as soon as the bell rang, it was business as usual for "The Nigerian Nightmare."

Long offered size, but not an accompanying strategy. Peter found himself chasing a broomstick, but Long's tactic of leaning away proved futile. Peter had no difficulty reaching him with long overhand rights, and made solid contact with the first one he threw. Peter stalked and sized up the right as Long retreated. Long never offered a serious offense, but perhaps he just needed to get out of the first round to get something started. It didn't happen. Peter was not overanxious, but he herded Long to the ropes, and then felled him with—what else? —an overhand right.

Long was quickly up and running, but the second and final knockdown was coming soon. A straight right push-punched the lurching underdog back to the ropes again. He caromed off the ropes at a low angle to be met by a chopping right that resembled a wrestler throwing a forearm smash. Whether the punch made a clean landing or not, Long remained on the canvas for the entirety of referee Arthur Mercante Jr.'s count, and the fight came to an end at 2:35 of the round. Long, 14-8 (12), stayed down for quite some time after the official termination, and some fans booed what they thought was a faint-hearted effort.

It was a credible performance by Peter, 26-1 (22), but nothing to build a case upon. The winner placed a premium on his victory nonetheless. "It seemed like he didn't want to fight and go on," the Nigerian beamed. "Now anybody who faces me is going to have a problem … I am ready right now to do everything to become heavyweight champion."

Television: **ESPN2**
Promoter: **Duva Boxing**
(4-28-06)
J. R. Jowett ■

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New Faces

(Continued from page 30)

blew up to 145, which is the heaviest I ever was in my life. My right hand was broke, so I quit boxing for a year.

"Marijuana is addictive, very addictive. I don't care what anyone says. Here I was, 17, and I was smoking marijuana again. My father and stepmother were out working, so that's all I did."

There were times when Peterson couldn't get his fix of pot. Those were the times when he grew frustrated.

"I was headed for destruction," Peterson admitted. "We lived in a zone in the projects of Washington, D.C., where all of the men were either in jail, doing drugs, or selling drugs. One of the reasons why I dropped out of high school was because I couldn't keep up socially. There were kids in fine clothes, and I thought I could dress like that by selling. But I never made any money, because I smoked all of the product."

That's when he and Lamont resorted to robbing people.

"I was packing pistols every day, and it was scary, because I was getting good at it and I was getting a taste for a murder," Peterson said.

One of the experiences that pushed him in that direction was the time Peterson was robbed himself—in front of a police station, of all places. He was waiting at a bus stop, when an older man riding a bike approached him carrying a glock. He pulled out the gun and told Peterson, "If you move, I'm going to blast you."

The thief took $34 off of Peterson, his ID, and a pair of new Michael Jordan sneakers. Peterson never reported it because he didn't want to be viewed as a neighborhood snitch. That's just the way it is in certain urban areas of America. And it consequently got Peterson to thinking.

A close friend of his was recently locked up and had left his gun with Peterson.

"The gun made me feel like I had a lot of power," he recalled. "I was getting high and getting drunk. It was like I was possessed. I was running wild. I'd rob whoever came first, but I'd always try to show a little class. I never robbed old people. I

remember I was always high or intoxicated every time I robbed someone. It bothered me to see fear in people's eyes, but most of the time, they just gave the money up."

One time, Peterson's attempt at a quick take didn't work as smoothly as he had planned it. He approached a woman walking on a darkened street. Using his same MO, he slithered toward her with the gun in his hand. But instead of handing Peterson over the cash, she handed him a strong dose of fear—by screaming at the top of her lungs.

Peterson ran.

The scene was cathartic. Peterson went a week without getting high or drunk. One week became two, then three. His right hand was fully heeled.

He returned to the gym. Enlightened.

"I was back," Peterson said. "I wanted to make a living boxing. I wanted to be the best."

In 2003, Peterson competed in the Golden Gloves, just for the experience. Oddly, he showed no ring rust. He won his first fight, and then his second, then a third, and a fourth. He reached the 132-pound national championship, facing Jose Orosco. Peterson exploded on him, beating him easily—with Finkel seated at ringside.

"Winning the 2003 Golden Gloves saved my life," Peterson said. "If I wasn't boxing, I would have kept doing what I was doing. Who knows where I would have wound up? I live with what I did every day now. I have a lot of guilt over what happened."

Peterson now has a much clearer vision of what lay ahead, and the boxing world is beginning to take notice.

"I certainly think Anthony has a good future," said Steve Farhood, the *ShoBox* color analyst. "He's fan-friendly in and out of the ring. He's the more demonstrative of the two brothers. He's also more exciting and more powerful than Lamont. The advancement of the Petersons has come slowly, because neither brother has fought a high level of competition. But that's not a bad thing. The kid can punch with the left hook. If you watch Anthony on TV, you want to see him again. Nothing is better than that for a younger fighter trying to make a name for himself."

Peterson feels fortunate, as his life could have certainly taken a tragic tumble. If he could go back through time to confront the 17-year-old Anthony Peterson, "I'd be like, 'Man you are so wrong,' and try to explain to him about trust and everything you have to learn about life outside of school. But I look back and saw what I did, and see what I'm doing now. It has to be God that brought me back from that far down." ■

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Peterson slams his vaunted left hook into Jermaine White during a nationally televised* ShoBox *broadcast. White had been doing a lot of talking before the fight, and Peterson made him pay with a third-round stoppage.

DON'T MISS
RING UPDATE WITH WILLIAM DETTLOFF
EVERY MONDAY ... EXCLUSIVELY ON: thering-online.com

Always insightful and often provocative, William Dettloff, *The Ring*'s senior writer, is the thinking-fans' columnist, a writer who never settles for the same old stale commentary you've already read a dozen times. For example, here's Dettloff's take on a handful of hot topics:

The dangers of boxing: "Long after you and I and everyone we know are long gone, men will still be fighting one another with their fists, and sometimes bad things will happen as a result. You may feel guilty about that fact if you wish. I will not."

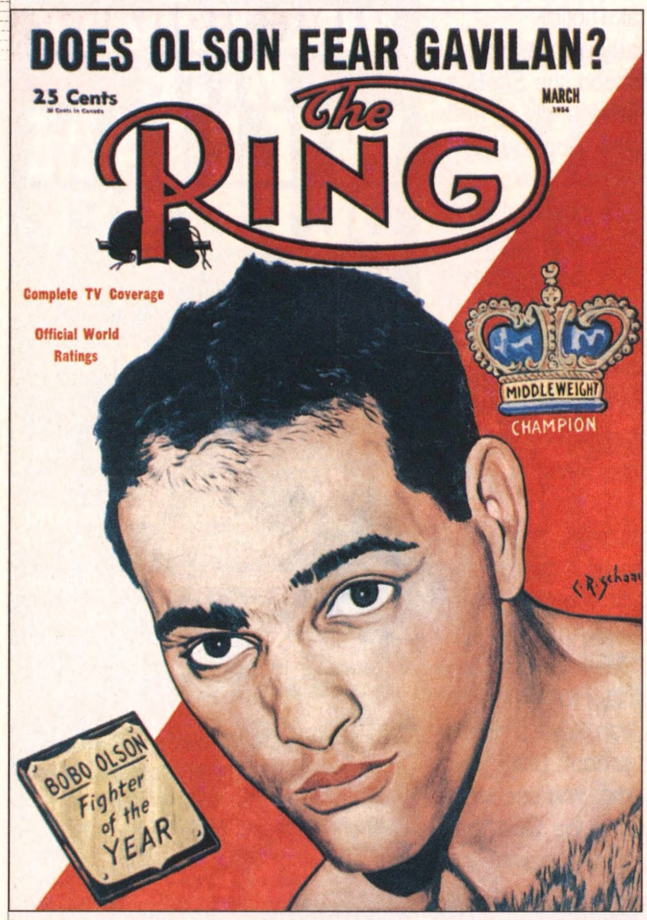
Nicolay Valuev: "He's hairier than Robin Williams and facially looks an awful lot like Lurch from *The Addams Family*. In today's heavyweight division, that can get you a good long way."

The lack of a dominant heavyweight: "When a heavyweight champ is dominant, the only fun comes in wondering when someone will cut him down to size and how. We rush a guy to the top of the mountain just for the pleasure of watching him get knocked off."

Dettloff on thering-online.com ... The perfect way to answer the week's opening bell!

4748/05.06

March 1954



COVER STORY: "Does Olson Fear Gavilan?" In a preview of what was to be middleweight champion Carl "Bobo" Olson's first defense, Associate Editor Daniel M. Daniel focused on a key psychological aspect of the fight.

"There are ring experts who will tell you Olson is afraid of 'The Hawk,'" wrote Daniels. "They mean to imply no cowardice. Far from it. Merely a sense of respect by Bobo for 'The Kid's' versatility, for his courage, for his boxing ability, for his wearing down of opponents with his telling sequences of punches."

Daniel also looked back at other 147-pound champs who challenged for the 160-pound crown, including Sugar Ray Robinson, whose temporary retirement had left the vacancy that Olson filled by beating Randy Turpin in '53.

As it turned out, when Gavilan and Olson, THE RING's 1953 Fighter of the Year, clashed in April '54, Olson retained the title with a hotly contested, 15-round majority decision. The following year, Robinson returned to the ring and knocked out Olson to regain the middleweight title he had relinquished in December '52.

World Champions

(for the period ended January 18, 1954)
Heavyweight: Rocky Marciano
Light Heavyweight: Archie Moore
Middleweight: Carl Olson
Welterweight: Kid Gavilan
Lightweight: James Carter
Featherweight: Sandy Saddler
Bantamweight: Jimmy Carruthers
Flyweight: Yoshiro Shirai

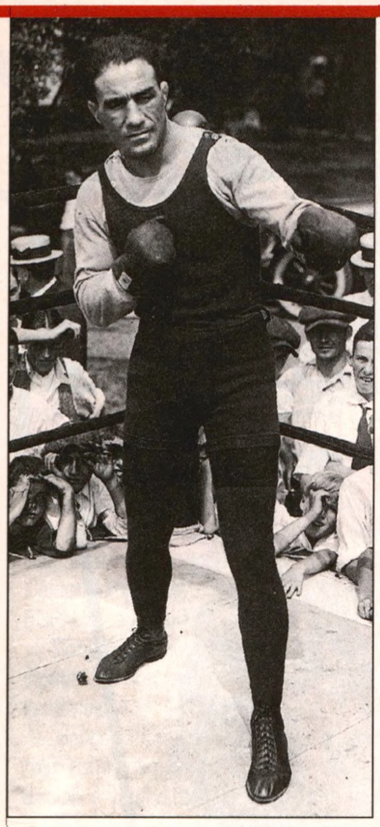
"When Is A Boy A Man" Writer-illustrator Ted Carroll tackled the problem posed by 18-year-old Floyd Patterson, who would not be legally eligible to compete in 10-round bouts in New York State until his 20th birthday.

"While the intent of the 20-year rule in New York is very good," wrote Carroll, "being clearly designed to protect the physical development of the youngster, and also to prevent his being subjected to pressures too great for such tender years, it runs contrary to the careers of most of the great boxers of the past."

Carroll then discussed a wide-range of fighters—Terry McGovern, George Dixon, Tommy Loughran, Billy Conn, Tony Canzoneri, Abe Atell, Jimmy McLarnin—who rose to prominence prior to their 20th birthday.

Carroll concluded by writing, "To curtail [Patterson's] activities until he reaches 20 would probably hamper his progress.

Patterson was too young to box 10-rounders in New York when Joey Maxim (left) outpointed him over eight round in 1954.



Dundee: Master of fighting off the ropes

It seems that the only solution here is to forget regulations in his case and, taking him at face value, regard him as any other contender, a contender of such unusual qualifications, that exception must be made in this case."

Carroll's opinion notwithstanding, Patterson continued to box scheduled eight-rounders in New York until after he turned 20.

"Rope Fighter" Regular contributor Lester Bromberg, who at the time also covered boxing for the now-defunct *New York World-Telegram*, delved into the return of fighters who knew how to use the ring ropes to their advantage.

"The current comeback is spearheaded by Carl 'Bobo' Olson, the new middleweight champion," wrote Bromberg. " ... [However] the unchallenged maestro of rope-fighters, for any generation, was Johnny Dundee, ex-featherweight kingpin. His habit was to back into the hemp, creating a spring-tension, and then bounce out and toward his opponent, deluging that soul with a volley from every angle."

"Boxing's Good Will Ambassador" Nat Fleischer, THE RING's globetrotting editor, wrote about his visit to Argentina, where he visited President Juan Peron (Eva's hubby), attended an amateur tournament at Luna Park, and also took in some pro action.

Reported Fleischer: "Though Argentine professionals are what in the United States and in England would be regarded as ordinary clubfighters ... they give all they have in an effort to win and that is what enables promoter [Ishmael] Pace to pack his arena with almost every show."

"In Sunny California" Correspondent Bill Miller nominated lightweight Cisco Andrade as 1953's Southern California Fighter of the Year. The "Compton Comet" went undefeated in 19 starts, winning 11 by knockout.

"He plays a rat-tat-tat on the phiz of his foes, sometimes scoring eight or 10 punches in rapid-fire order before the opposition can counter with one," gushed Miller.

Andrade went on to have a decent career. He challenged Joe Brown for the lightweight title in October 1960, losing a 15-round decision at Los Angeles' Olympic Auditorium. He retired in '62 with an overall record of 46-12-1 (26).

Langlois and Basilio battle to a draw in Syracuse

"In Syracuse Ring" There was a mild upset when Frenchman Pierre Langlois held local hero Carmen Basilio to a 10-round draw in a nationally televised bout that drew 7,121 fans to War Memorial Auditorium.

"The battle was fiercely fought and both fighters were covered in gore as the bout ended," wrote Billy Shaw. "The crowd booed the verdict, but to most ringside observers, it appeared fair enough."

Basilio and Langlois fought a rematch in April 1954, with Basilio winning a 10-round decision.

"News From Sunny Australia" In reviewing the past year, correspondent Ray Mitchell noted that the only world title bout held in Australia in '53 was bantamweight ruler Jimmy Carruthers' 15-round decision over Henry "Pappy" Gault, which drew a bumper crowd of approximately 32,000 to Sydney's Sports Grounds.

■ *Flyweight champion Carruthers*

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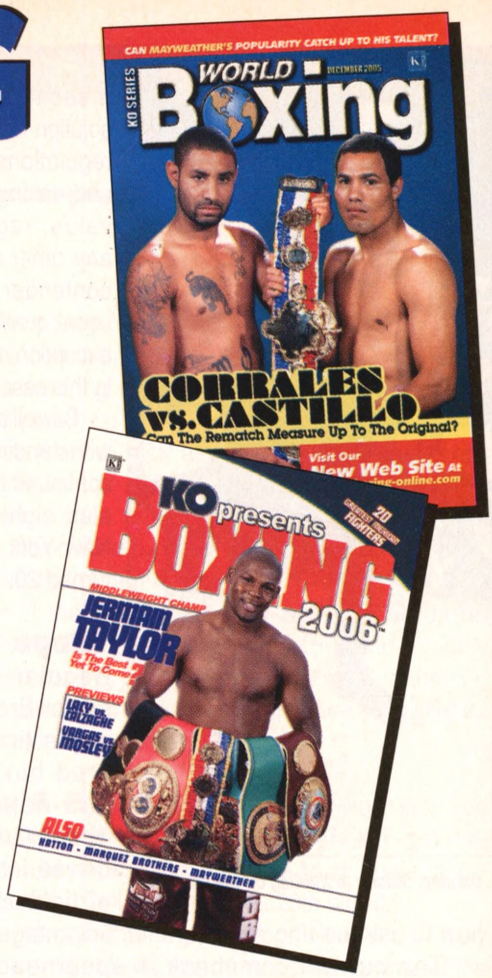

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[On The Move]

The saga of two fighters going in different directions

By Joe Santoliquito

Jesse Feliciano/Las Vegas, Nevada

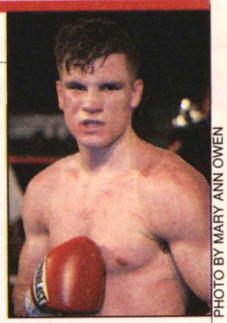


PHOTO BY MARY ANN OWEN

Feliciano: Back in the groove

Welterweight Jesse Feliciano's career finally seems to be coming together the way he always hoped it would, but it took several setbacks and participation in a near-tragedy before it finally dawned on him that boxing was a serious business. The 23-year-old had a bad habit of shirking training, but he was also weighed down by what happened to one of his opponents.

Currently, Feliciano, 14-5-3 (8), is on the best run of his career, going 2-1-1 in his last four fights. One of his two most recent victories was a 10-round majority decision over former IBF junior welterweight titleholder "Cool" Vince Phillips. Feliciano followed that up by battling *Contender* favorite Alfonso Gomez to a thrilling eight-round draw on ESPN in early-May.

Tony Feliciano, Jesse's father, trainer, and manager, has always thought his son had talent. It was just a matter of finding the discipline to harness it.

"Jesse is growing up, and he's getting more and more focused," said Toney. "In the past, Jesse had a problem at times with training discipline, but he believes more in himself now."

Discipline was one problem, but fighting top prospects on short notice has also held him back.

"He didn't have a gold medal, so he's had to fight tough guys," said Tony Feliciano.

Among those "tough guys" were Demtrius Hopkins, Mohamad Abdulaev, and Mike Arnaoutis, all of whom defeated him. But it was a *victory* over previously undefeated Freddy Cadena that really shook up Feliciano.

He fought Cadena on ESPN2's *Friday Night Fights* on April 4, 2003, and stopped him the sixth of a scheduled eight-rounder. Soon after the fight was waved over, Cadena went into convulsions and needed emergency care to live. The scene left an indelible mental image that Feliciano had trouble shaking.

"I was the one who ended Freddie Cadena's career, and I had some problems with that," Feliciano said. "I was in peak condition when I fought Freddie, and I'll admit that that fight messed with my head a little. When I saw Freddy going into convulsions, when he collapsed in the ring, and everyone was screaming, I had some guilt about what I'd done. I look back and think that that could have been me. I'm just glad that Freddy's okay today. I used to go out there wanting to kill people when I fought, but once that happened to Freddy, I held back a little bit."

He certainly wasn't reluctant to throw punches against Gomez. They slugged it out toe-to-toe throughout most of the bout, with Feliciano coming on strong down the stretch to earn a draw.

"I'm getting over it now," said Feliciano. "I'm getting back into my groove.

Jesse Brinkley/Las Vegas, Nevada

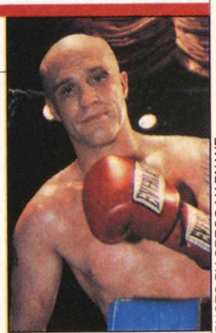


PHOTO BY GREGG MARNANE

Brinkley: Looking for a win

Super middleweight Jesse Brinkley was confused and frustrated. All he wanted was a chance to prove himself, but in Brinkley's mind, referee Mike Ortega took that opportunity away from him by waving off his fight with Joe Spina 1:50 into the 11th round in early-May.

It marked the third loss in the last four fights for *The Contender* star. In the opinion of some, it should have been the fourth-straight loss for Brinkley, who many believe lost to fellow *Contender* contestant Anthony Bonsante in May 2005.

Against Spina, Brinkley was pretty much dominating the bout when Spina caught him with a bodyshot. The 29-year-old Brinkley crumpled to the canvas in pain, but was able to get to his feet. He even got some extra time to rest while his mouthpiece was rinsed and replaced. Still, when action resumed and Spina attacked Brinkley's body again, he lurched sideways and stumbled away from his assailant. At that point, Ortega determined he was unable to continue and stopped the fight.

"Someone give me the definition of a prize fight," Brinkley demanded rhetorically, still fuming over the stoppage. "I was down, and I should have gotten a chance to continue. Back in the 1940s and '50s, fighters had heart. I'm confused about my last loss. I can't get over the stoppage. To tell you the truth, I'm pretty heartbroken over the whole thing. But I have to move on."

Brinkley, 26-4 (17), received incredible publicity from the first year of *The Contender*. He was one of the more popular fighters on the show not so much for his ability, but more for his loquacious personality. To Brinkley's credit, he's kept his focus on fighting and not the "Hollywood route," like some of his other *Contender* brethren.

"The whole *Contender* thing is helpful because more people recognize me as to who I am," Brinkley said. "I was actually in everyone's living room for months. The show did wonders for boxing and for me. It showed that professional fighters aren't mean people. But I haven't gotten caught up with all that TV and Hollywood and that whole thing. My goal is still the same. I always wanted to be a world champion. I will get a belt somewhere. But I have four losses in my career. It's where I am right now. I have to get a win. I've lost three of my last four, and the one fight that I won (against Bonsante) I got booed out of arena. But I'll be back on track, no reason not to. I won't change anything. I showed I had the heart and balls to get up."

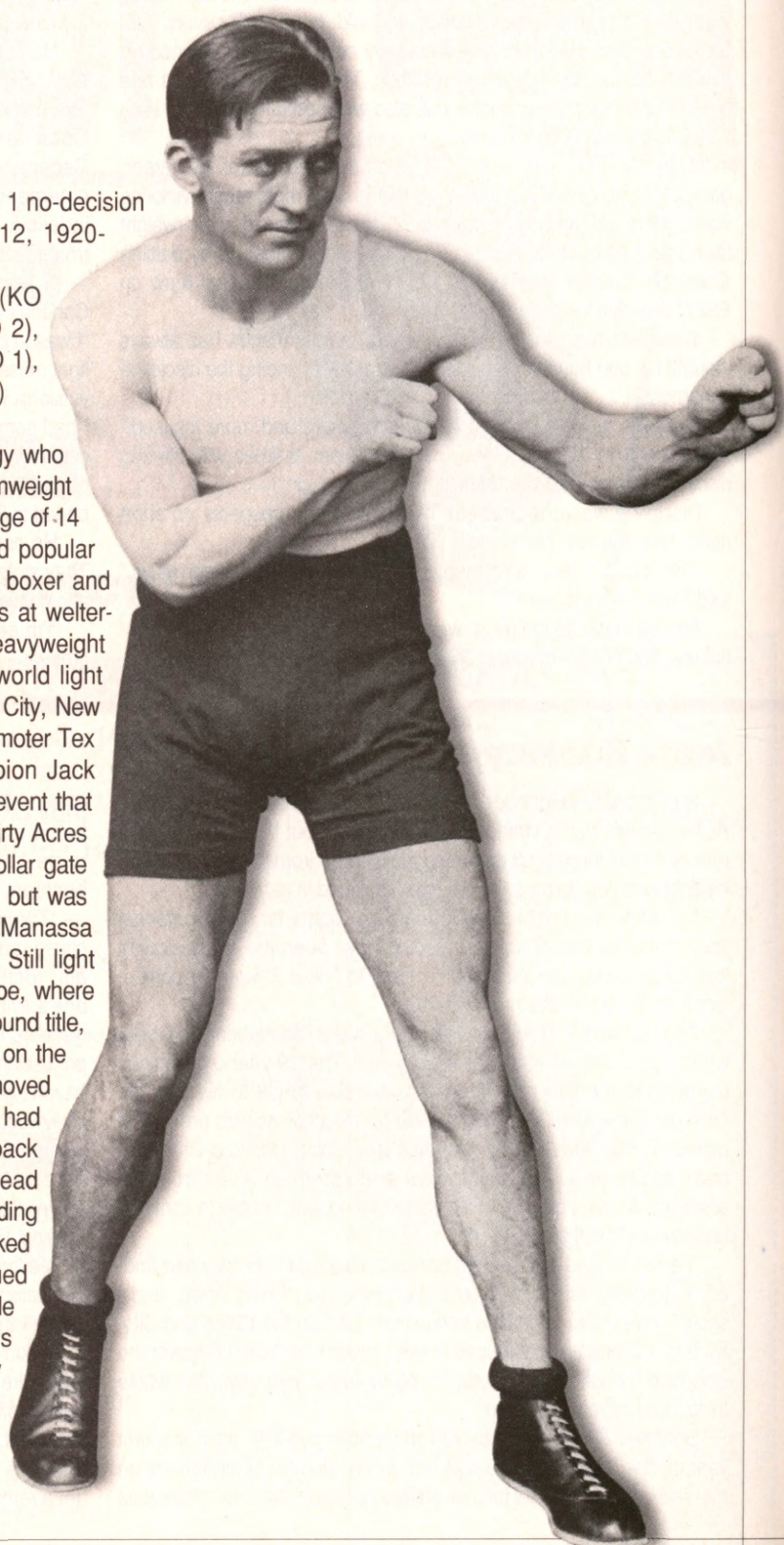
Still, the Spina loss gnaws at him.

"I don't understand what the point is about teaching a kid heart, if they take that chance away," Brinkley said. "I felt great and confident, really strong at 168. I thought I was picking Spina apart. Up to that point, I thought the fight was easy. I got up after the knockdown, and they stopped the fight. I could have gone on. Hopefully, I can get a rematch." ■

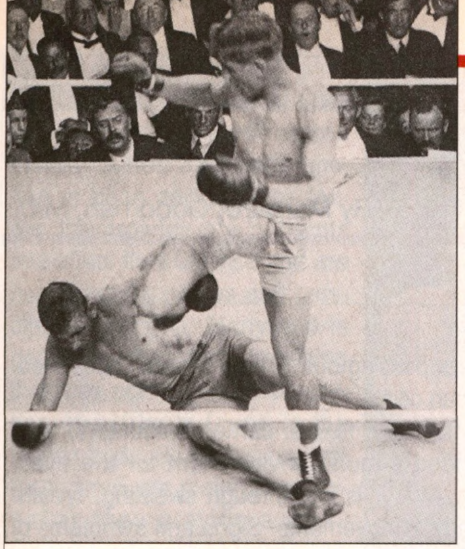
Hall of Fame Profile

A thumbnail biography of a ring great who has received the ultimate honor: induction into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in Canastota, New York

Georges Carpentier



Nickname: The Orchid Man
Birthdate: January 12, 1894
Birthplace: Lens, France
Weight Class: Light Heavyweight
Height: 5'11½"
Professional Record: 88-14-6 (56) with 1 no-decision
Title: World Light Heavyweight (October 12, 1920-September 24, 1922)
Best Performances: Young Joseph (KO 10), Jim Sullivan (KO 2), Bandsman Rice (KO 2), Bombardier Billy Wells (KO 1), Joe Beckett (KO 1), Battling Levinsky (KO 4), Ted "Kid" Lewis (KO 1)
Year of IBHOF Induction: 1991
Background: Carpentier was a fistic prodigy who turned professional as either a flyweight or bantamweight (sources are vague as to his debut weight) at the age of 14 and became one of the most accomplished and popular European fighters of all-time ... A quick, stylish boxer and sharp, accurate puncher, he won European titles at welterweight, middleweight, light heavyweight, and heavyweight before knocking out Battling Levinsky for the world light heavyweight title on October 12, 1920, in Jersey City, New Jersey ... Made such a hit with U.S. fans that promoter Tex Rickard matched him with heavyweight champion Jack Dempsey the following year, a much-ballyhooed event that lured a crowd more than 80,000 fans to Boyle's Thirty Acres in Jersey City and created boxing's first million-dollar gate ($1,789,238). The Frenchman boxed well at first, but was soon overpowered by the larger, harder-hitting "Manassa Mauler" and knocked out in the fourth round ... Still light heavyweight champ, Carpentier returned to Europe, where he made his only successful defense of the 175-pound title, stopping Ted "Kid" Lewis ... Next, he put the title on the line against Battling Siki, a Senegalese who had moved to France as a child. It is widely believed that Siki had agreed to throw the fight, but decided to fight back when Carpentier tagged him with some hard head blows. Whatever the story, Siki battered the defending champ, lumped up his handsome face, and knocked him out in the sixth round ... Carpentier continued fighting until 1926, but never fought for a world title again ... In his final two major bouts, he was stopped by Gene Tunney and outpointed by Tommy Loughran ... Still very popular after his retirement from the ring, Carpentier acted in French movies and musical reviews and operated a restaurant ... He died on October 28, 1975.



Gunboat Smith hits the floor during 1914 bout with Carpentier in London, England. Carpentier won the fight and something called the "White Heavyweight Title."

A battered Carpentier sits on the ring apron after being knocked out by Battling Siki at Velodrome Buffalo in Paris, France, September 1923.

The gigantic crowd that turned up at Boyle's Thirty Acres for Carpentier's bid to win the heavyweight title from Jack Dempsey in 1921. Carpentier was knocked out, but took home a then-astronomical purse of $200,000 from boxing's first million-dollar gate.

A dapper and debonair Carpentier shares a cocktail with his wife at a café in Deauville, France.

Carpentier takes a playful poke at middleweight champion Tony Zale in 1948. He was back in the United States to help train fellow Frenchman Marcel Cerdan, who would stop Zale to win the title later that year.

By Margaret Goodman, M.D.

Water vs. Sports Drinks

Adequate hydration is probably one of the most important things a boxer must maintain while training and during a fight. In fact, dehydration is repeatedly an issue, especially regarding the weigh-in debate and when there is a ring death. For some time, commissions have lobbied to change regulations that exclude anything but water at ringside. The argument is that alternative products lessen dehydration risks. Is that true? Under what circumstances do sports drinks benefit athletes? What is the down side?

Recommendations regarding the daily requirements of water you need depends on many factors, including your general health, how active you are, and where you live. Humidity and hot weather increases sweating, and higher altitudes may trigger increased urination and more rapid breathing, which use more fluid.

Water comprises 60 percent of your body weight, and every organ system we have depends on it to function properly. Vigorous exercise, especially when in a warm environment, places your cardiovascular and thermoregulatory functions in significant stress. Plasma volume decreases along with an increase in plasma osmolality (solvents or naturally occurring chemicals in plasma) that can eventually impair cardiovascular function and lead to heat exhaustion or passing out. In very severe cases, neurological failure can occur.

Water helps flush out toxins, carries nutrients to your cells, and provides a moist environment for the eyes, nose, and throat. Water is lost through sweating, breathing, urine, and bowel movements. Signs and symptoms of dehydration include thirst, fatigue, headache, dry mouth, dizziness, muscle weakness, lightheadedness, and little or no urination. An adult typically urinates 1.5 liters per day; you lose about 1 liter through breathing, sweating, and bowel movements.

The Institute of Medicine recommends men consume a minimum of 3 liters (13 cups) a day of beverages, and 2.2 liters (9 cups) a day for women. If this is followed, you should never feel thirsty, and your urine should be pale yellow. Current fluid replacement guidelines recommend fluid replacement equivalent to 100 percent of sweat lost during exercise. Any weight deficiency (such as what might occur during a fight) represents a failure to drink adequately. A 147-pound boxer losing two pounds during a 10-round fight needs an additional 32 ounces in future contests. Note that food accounts for 20 percent of your total fluid intake.

To determine the amount of fluids needed to prevent dehydration, a fighter should weigh himself before and after training and/or a fight. Any weight loss is almost always due to water loss. He should eat a high carbohydrate, low fat diet and drink plenty of fluids between exercise sessions. *Plain water is best.* He should drink 17 ounces or more than two cups of fluid, two hours before exercise. Then, drink every 15 minutes during exercise. Drinks should be kept close by and cooler than room temperature. Training longer than an hour should include carbohydrates to delay fatigue, fuel muscle contraction, and include sodium to enhance palatability and encourage drinking more fluids.

The first sports drink, Lucozade, was manufactured in 1927, while Gatorade was introduced in 1966. Sports drinks, while helping an athlete re-

PHOTO BY JAY LASH

Even Mike Tyson needs water

hydrate, also replenish sugar, nutrients, and electrolytes needed to help their body function at peak performance levels. Electrolytes are nutrients that affect fluid balance and are necessary for nerves and muscles to function. Many sports drinks are "isotonic," meaning that they contain equal proportion of nutrients found in the human body. Some believe that these products maintain stamina, as they provide a small amount of carbohydrate to working muscles.

There are several theoretical benefits of sports drinks, including encouraging voluntary fluid intake. Thirst is driven by a rise in the concentration of sodium and a drop in the blood volume, both of which occur with dehydration. The manufacturers believe that plain water shuts off the thirst mechanism and an athlete may not drink enough. It is thought that sports drinks also stimulate fast absorption. This, however, depends on the amount and kinds of carbohydrates they contain. Rapid re-hydration is crucial, and many think that maintaining blood glucose levels, carbohydrate, and electrolyte balance will maintain performance when exercise is more than 60 to 90 minutes in duration. If you are not exercising or competing longer than that, then water remains the best drink for an athlete.

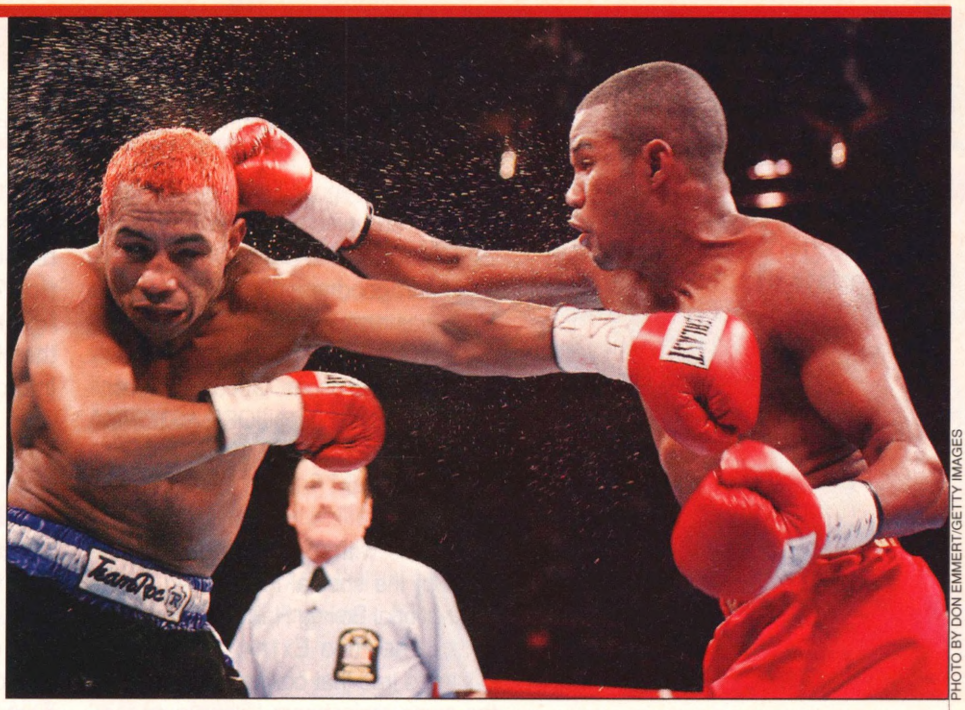


PHOTO BY DON EMMERT/GETTY IMAGES

Note how much water, in the form of sweat, Mayorga lost from taking a single Trinidad punch

If a boxer does decide to use a sports drink in training, you should chose one with only 5 to 8 percent carbohydrates per ounce with 120 to 170 mg sodium. Higher concentrated drinks actually delay absorption. Drinks contain either glucose or fructose. In some, fructose has been known to cause cramps, diarrhea, stomachache, or bloating, but fructose improves the taste.

Energy drinks, such as Red Bull, SoBe, and Power House claim to increase energy, stamina, metabolism, and alertness, are also showing up readily in boxing gyms and are occasionally confiscated in fighter dressing rooms. The primary ingredients are usually caffeine, taurine (an amino acid and building block of protein highly contained in the heart with unknown significance), and glucuronolactone (a carbohydrate). Some also contain guarana (a South African caffeine-like substance), stimulants like ginseng, and other amino acids, and herbs. Although vitamins and minerals sound health-promoting, excessive consumption can reduce the bioavailability of other nutrients. These drinks, especially when used as a sports drink, may cause problems such as heart irregularities, nausea/vomiting, and electrolyte disturbances.

Sports drinks are not typically allowed ringside for several reasons: They are not necessary until strenuous exercise has continued longer than an hour. A 12-round fight is 36 minutes, plus 11 minutes of rest for a total of 47 minutes. Sports drinks have not been proven to benefit a boxer who is well-hydrated, and if spilled on the athlete, gloves, or canvas, are sticky. If spilled in the eye or an open wound, they will burn. Moreover, they could contain illegal substances contraindicated in a boxing match.

If commission regulations change regarding sports drinks, then research needs to be conducted as to whether boxers require these drinks in such short competition time. The time frame of a fight suggests not.

Furthermore, commissions would have to carefully monitor which brands are allowed and make certain they have not been tampered with, and step up drug testing, which is already too limited in many jurisdictions. Otherwise, an unfair playing field could easily exist, and, in a sport with so many controversies already, one more is unnecessary unless the benefits significantly outweigh the risks.

***

The Combat Sports Center for Safety and Research (CSCSR) has been created to promote safety and awareness in sports such as boxing and mixed martial arts. Safety decisions need to be made on the basis of hard data rather than guesswork. The center's first study is underway, examining the issue of weights and weigh-ins in conjunction with the California State Athletic Commission. The CSCSR is a not-for-profit 501(3)c Corporation. We are asking the boxing community to join in this important and necessary endeavor to enhance boxing safety. If interested, please contact either Dr. Gregory H. Bledsoe at gbledsoe@1jhmi.edu or Dr. Goodman at 702-255-8785. ■

[Come Out Writing]

Letters may be edited for reasons of space and clarity. Send your comments to Come Out Writing, THE RING, P.O. Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034.

Or e-mail letters to comeoutwriting@yahoo.com. E-mailed letters will include the writer's e-mail address unless a city and state of origin is provided.

Oxidized Oscar

Thank goodness that Oscar De La Hoya was rusty for his match with Ricardo Mayorga. That way, I got to see six rounds instead of one. Good job, Oscar.

JOSE ASTORGA
Grandview, MO

The Fame Game

I agree with Nigel Collins' assessment of the special role played by the International Boxing Hall of Fame ("Ringside," THE RING EXTRA, June 2006). While it's true that boxing does not have the same mainstream following as football, basketball, and baseball, boxing is unique in a way that no other sport can compare. Boxing is not only about great winning records and statistics, but also about dignity, courage, perseverance, national pride, and overcoming poverty. These are the things that endear us to fighters like Arturo Gatti, Barry McGuigan, George Chuvalo, Aaron Pryor, and Manny Pacquiao, and these are the things that should be celebrated by the IBHOF. After all, if a boxer with an average record is remembered for decades because of a memorable fight, isn't that reason enough to merit an induction? When debating whether a fighter deserves to be honored by the Hall, we should take these things into consideration.

AARON S. BAYLEY
Toronto, Ontario

PHOTO BY DONALD MIRALLE/GETTY IMAGES

Ricardo Mayorga grimaces as Oscar De La Hoya delivers what looks like a below-the-belt left hook. Reader Jose Astorga is happy that the one-sided but exciting bout lasted as long as it did.

Where's Joe?

I just received the July issue of THE RING DOUBLE. I was very surprised not to see Joe Calzaghe on the cover. THE RING championship is a big deal, and not only did Joe win it, he's the first to win a RING belt at 168 pounds. If someone wins THE RING championship, especially in the fashion Calzaghe did, you should put him on the cover. Duh!

DUSTIN REINHOLD
Chillicothe, OH

[Editors note: It is probably small consolation to Mr. Reinhold, but Calzaghe was on the cover of the British edition of the July 2006 issue.]

Rising Star

Here in Buffalo, New York, we have a hidden star in junior welterweight Vincent Arroyo, 5-0 (3). He has lots of power and speed, and, in my opinion, he could eventually be better than Miguel Cotto. Fans who don't know about Arroyo are going to be surprised.

PAUL M. SOTACK
Buffalo, NY

Awful Audley!

As a British boxing fan, I feel the urge to express my huge disappointment regarding how Audley Harrison's career has ended up. So much was expected of Harrison after he won Olympic gold in 2000. The fact that he appears to be finished without even having won the British heavyweight title—something Audley once claimed he would do after only five fights—is quite astonishing. As such, "A-Force" has to rate very highly amongst the most underachieving Olympic gold

medalists to have turned pro. The fact that Harrison's career looks unlikely to progress as far as a bout for a meaningful belt is something no one would have believed back when he was making us all listen to his boasting while performing on prime time BBC in the U.K. What a massive letdown he has been!

JAMES SLATER
York, England

Remembering Patterson

The recent passing of former heavyweight champion Floyd Patterson saddened me greatly. My father told me that Floyd was the fastest fighter, bar none, that he ever saw. Had Patterson been a 200-pound man, he may have been as dominating as Ali.

DAVID JOENKS
Santa Clara, CA

What's The Score?

I read each issue of THE RING cover-to-cover and one of my favorite sections is "Ringside Reports." I truly enjoy reading how your reporters interpret the bouts I had watched earlier that month, but more importantly, how they scored them, because I've scored every bout I've watched since 2003. Although they frequently get a bad rap, the majority of judges are decent. But the final arbitrator for me on all things boxing is and will continue to be THE RING, for your unbiased reporting and, of course, your ranking system. As a suggestion for either the print or online edition, is there an area you could specifically devote just how THE RING scored each fight per month? I feel it would be a very useful area of an already stellar read.

PAUL FURIA
Los Angeles, CA

The death of former heavyweight champion Floyd Patterson has sadden the boxing community, including reader David Joenks, who wonders how much more the speedy Patterson would have achieved had he been a larger man.

This Is Not The '80s

I just finished watching the Acelino Freitas-Zahir Raheem fight on HBO. It was a decent fight, but by no means on the level of what I used to watch on ABC's *Wide World Of Sports* every weekend in the 1980s. HBO's *Boxing After Dark* is good, but doesn't compare with the '80s, when even housewives knew the fighters' names. In my opinion, Freitas-Raheem was an average fight with neither man fighting up to the best of his ability.

GLOVER HILL III
Brooklyn, NY

Kenny Kudos

I'm writing to give ESPN's Brian Kenny the respect and credit he deserves for not backing down in his interview with Floyd Mayweather. It was very humorous and satisfying to see Floyd put in his place, but it was also something that had to be done. Kenny set the record and Mayweather straight by letting him know that the true champions are the ones with THE RING magazine belt. From the beginning, Kenny has been one of THE RING's strongest allies, and for that, all of us old-school boxing fans are thankful. Great job, Brian.

SAM ROBERTS JR.
Sequoia_goodwater@hotmail.com

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Luis Collazo fires a left hook at Ricky Hatton during their welterweight bout in Boston. Reader Patrick Tee thinks the Englishman was lucky to get the decision and that he would be better served fighting as a junior welterweight.

King No Savior

What was this load of drivel I just read in *Forbes* magazine about Don King being "boxing's last great hope." Wasn't it King, along with all those alphabet gangs, who got boxing in trouble to begin with?

CAM DOKIS
cwdokis@lakeheadu.ca

Lucky Ricky

Ricky Hatton got the verdict and a new title, but personally, I thought Luis Collazo was unlucky not to have gotten the verdict or at least a draw. After all, he outboxed and outpunched the Brit for much of the bout and almost stopped him in the 12th.

The advantages Hatton enjoyed at 140 pounds, namely, his physical strength and aggression, failed to make much impression on the larger Collazo. Ricky should count himself lucky he wasn't fighting the much stronger Antonio Margarito instead. Hatton would be better off returning to the smaller junior welterweight division, where his physical style made such an impression.

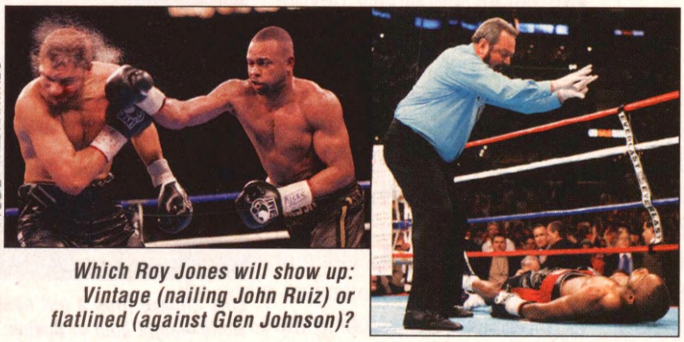
PATRICK TEE
Montreal, Quebec ■

[Looking Ahead]

By Joe Santoliquito

Roy Jones' Last Dance?

For light heavyweight **Prince Badi Ajamu**, it's a chance to climb out of boxing obscurity and make a name for himself against an all-time great. For **Kasey Thompson** and **Rich Danner**, it's a chance to make a big promotional splash. For **Roy Jones**, it could be his *last chance* to prove he's still one of the elite fighters in the sport.



PHOTOS BY WILL HART/HBO

Which Roy Jones will show up: Vintage (nailing John Ruiz) or flatlined (against Glen Johnson)?

The comeback fight for Jones in Boise, Idaho, will mean a little something for everyone involved on the pay-per-view card, scheduled for July 29, at the 6,000-seat Qwest Arena. Jones, 49-4 (38), has to know that a loss would be the nadir of his career. If he loses, he might not have anything left to do but wait for a call from the Hall of Fame.

Thompson, who heads Boise-based Knockout Promotions, and Danner, who heads the Las Vegas-based Sports and Entertainment Media and is backing the fight in conjunction with sports supplement company Xyience, think they'll see the vintage Jones, not the Jones last seen running from **Antonio Tarver** or the one stretched on the canvas by **Glen Johnson**.

"We feel Roy is committed to getting back on top and we want to give him another shot," Thompson said. "We've heard from Roy himself that he felt that there was a lack of focus in his last few fights. He has the talent and he deserves a chance. I've heard a lot of different things about this fight, but for Idaho this is pretty big. I've heard that I'm taking a chance with Roy. It depends on which Roy Jones comes to fight. Roy still thinks he has it in him. We're willing to roll the dice and see what happens."

Badi Ajamu, 25-2-1 (14), would love nothing better than to extend Jones' losing streak. He certainly doesn't want to be viewed as a steppingstone on Jones' way to a confrontation with super middleweight world champion **Joe Calzaghe**.

There is a reason, however, why the light-punching Badi Ajamu, despite winning his last six fights, was handpicked by Jones:

"Because Roy thinks he can beat me, that's the reason why I was picked," said Badi Ajamu, who is trained by **Buddy McGirt**. "I think a lot about ending Roy's career. I think about it time and time again. This is a make-or-break fight I think for both of us. The guy I'll be facing on that other side of the ring is going to be desperate; I'm also desperate, because the doorway gets open wider for me with a win like this."

Badi Ajamu is prepared to see a lot of movement, flashiness, and hand speed from Jones. But he isn't intimidated. Badi Ajamu's been in the ring with some of the best. He was Tarver's main sparring partner for his rematch with Johnson, and was a key sparring partner for **Bernard Hopkins** in training for his epic victory over **Felix Trinidad**.

Boise will mark a considerable step back for what Jones is used to. He's fought in some of the most luxurious venues in the world, with ticket prices to match. For the Boise affair, Danner and Thompson are being a little more practical. Ticket prices will range from $350 ringside to $50. The pay-per-view cost is a reasonable $24.95.

"We're looking to sell out, so we'll be able to pay for the entire event from the gate," Danner said. "Plus, Jones is working with us, and he'll receive a percentage of the pay-per-view. It's boxing entertainment at a bargain. Fans get to see an older and more mature Roy Jones. And Roy recognizes that this is a point in his career where he is at a crossroads. He has to use his business sense and maturity. We're calling it 'Hold Nothing Back.' Roy can't hold anything back."

Listen Up

Evander Holyfield was originally scheduled to be on the Boise card (possibly to make Jones look young), but Danner confirms that they could not come to terms with the former heavyweight champion. Local favorite and one-time cruiserweight contender **Kenny Keene** will fight **Virgil Hill**. Olympic gold medalist **Andre Ward** is also scheduled to fight, as well as **Cleveland Corder**, possibly against **Joey Gilbert** of *The Contender* ... On July 8, **Roman Karmazin** will defend the IBF junior middleweight belt against former welterweight world champion **Cory Spinks**, in Spinks' hometown of St. Louis, Missouri, at the Savvis Center ... In another intriguing bout on the same night, **Vivian Harris** will take on undefeated **Mike Arnaoutis** in a junior welterweight clash in Atlantic City ... Finally, **Ike Quartey** faces a big challenge in former welterweight world champ **Vernon Forrest** in a junior middleweight bout August 5, at a site and time yet to be determined. ■

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Virgil Hill will fight on the Jones-Badi Ajamu undercard

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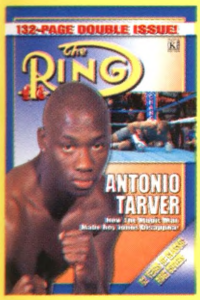

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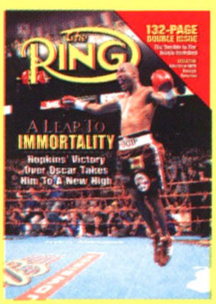

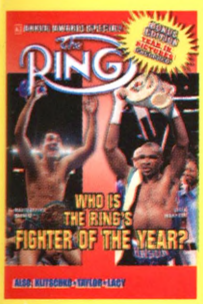

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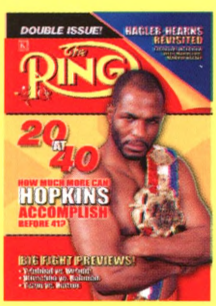

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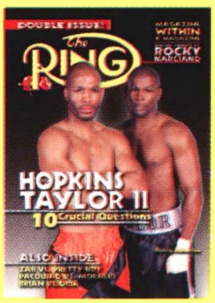

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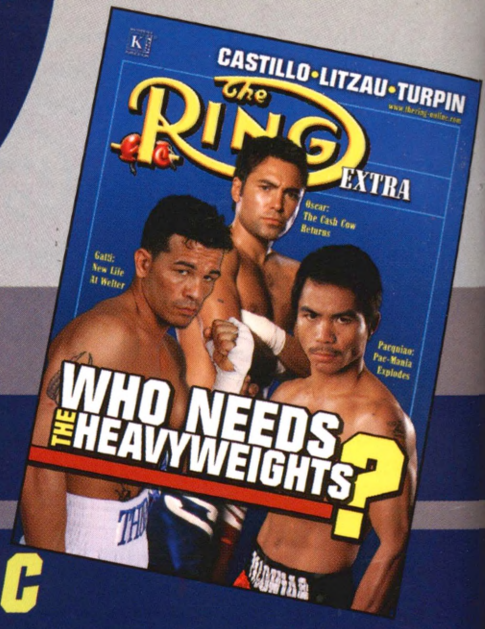

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